Heterosexual Male Sexuality: Representations and Sexual Subjectivity

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.
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Abstract

This research study explores the relationship between cultural representations of heterosexual male sexuality and heterosexual men’s sexuality. A critical realist framework is adopted to facilitate the examination of this topic with qualitative and quantitative methods; an analysis of representations in men’s magazines, an analysis of men’s accounts produced in individual and group interviews, and an analysis of a large-scale survey are undertaken. Different recruitment strategies are utilised to produce a diverse sample of heterosexual men living in urban Australia. The quantitative sample comprises 457 men aged between 18 and 77 years; the qualitative sample comprises 45 men aged between 18 and 63 years. In both samples, the mean age is 33 years. The magazine sample comprises eight issues of two Australian men’s lifestyle magazines.

The analyses of representations and discourses of heterosexual male sexuality in cultural material and men’s accounts produced in interviews, demonstrate that whilst there are multiple and contradictory representations of heterosexual male sexuality, there is also a highly consistent taken-for-granted account. The quantitative analysis of survey data demonstrates a positive relationship between men’s endorsement of this hegemonic account and both sexual anxiety (fear of punishment for violating sexual norms) and anxious insecurity (feeling a lack of confidence and control in sexual interactions); it also reveals a negative relationship between men’s endorsement of the hegemonic account and sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and satisfaction with sexual functioning. The qualitative analysis of interview data reveals the complex and difficult process by which men negotiate hegemonic representations in the production of their own sexual subjectivity - taking up subject positions and enacting allied practices; it also shows the often negative consequences of this process for men. The findings of this study further demonstrate that across age and relationship context, there is considerable variation in men’s experiences of sexuality, negotiation of representations and in the consequences they experience.

The findings of the study are significant for understanding heterosexual men’s sexual subjectivity and sexual practices; the implications for heterosexual relationships, sexual coercion and violence, and for sexual health and education are considered throughout.
CHAPTER 1. Introduction

How terrible to be a man, and to have sex on one’s mind all the time, as men are supposed to do. She had read in one of her magazines that the average man thought about sex over sixty times a day! She could not believe that figure, but studies had apparently revealed it. The average man, going about his daily business, had all these thoughts in his mind; thoughts of pushing and shoving, as men do, while he was actually doing something else! Did doctors think about it as they took your pulse? Did lawyers think about it as they sat at their desks and plotted? Did pilots think about it as they flew their aeroplanes? It simply beggared belief.

And Mr J.L.B. Matekoni, with his innocent expression and his plain face, was he thinking about it while he looked into distributor caps or heaved batteries out of engines? She looked at him; how could one tell? Did a man thinking about sex start to leer, or open his mouth and show his pink tongue, or… No. That was impossible.

(The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, McCall Smith, 1998, p. 147)

It’s a well-known fact that, however tired or ill they may be, men can mentally prepare themselves for the sexual act with two simple words - ‘she’s naked’. But for the woman…

(The knowledge: Get sex on demand (FHM Jun 2002))
We are told that men are thinking about sex all the time, that they are easy aroused, and that male sexuality is “simple, straight-forward and problem free” (Zilbergeld, 1978, p. 11). According to Bernie Zilbergeld these are the taken for granted truths about men. They are also, he suggests, a cultural myth. The representations of man as always ready and looking for opportunities to have sex, limited by woman’s reluctance, are ubiquitous in popular culture, and many would argue in medical and scientific domains. And yet contradictory representations abound.

Discussions in the media around Viagra have brought the notion of a vulnerable male sexuality to the fore, and suggest a worldwide epidemic of erectile dysfunction (B. L. Marshall, 2002). Moreover, these representations call into question the representation of male sexuality as problem-free, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the significance of a hard penis for heterosexual sex and for signifying men’s sexual desire. Also undermining the representation of a simple driven male sexuality are research findings that the most significant sexual concern for Western men is a lack of desire. This has only recently become part of the public discussion around male sexuality, perhaps because of growing dissenting voices around ‘Viagramania’; low take up of repeat prescriptions for Viagra has been suggested to be due to men’s realisation that whilst it produces an erection it doesn’t produce desire (see for example Morgentaler, 2003), or indeed, ‘good’ sex.

There are also representations of a problematic male sexuality. In the past few years, a number of high profile gang rape cases in the Western Sydney area and a continuous stream of sport related sex scandals (in Australian rugby, AFL, Australian cricket) have highlighted the extremes of male sexuality understood as biologically driven - insatiable, uncontrollable, aggressive, and sometimes violent. In each case the blaming of alcohol, a lack of parental supervision, the difficulties of multiculturalism, or simply allowing young men to be too close to young women, suggest that men’s sexuality is driven by a need that requires constant external surveillance and control. Thus, the representations of heterosexual male sexuality evident in popular culture, and in public debates around sexuality, defy the notion that it is “simple, straight-forward and problem free”.

2
A man’s responsibility for sex - for his own and his partner’s satisfaction - is also an important feature of cultural representations (Zilbergeld, 1999). It is no longer sufficient for man to show a woman a good time to get her into bed, the good times must continue in bed, with the result that a man who does not ‘provide’ a woman with an orgasm - or at least make a convincing effort - is positioned as selfish (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003). Indeed, if he concentrates on his own pleasure he is unlikely to enjoy himself: “Concentrate on her pleasure first (if she’s not enjoying herself, you won’t either)” (Some enchanted evening…how to have a one-night stand without making a complete mess of things. Men’s Health Dec 2001). What are the implications of representations that portray a male sexuality that is selfish if it does not meet a woman’s expectation - indeed demand - for an orgasm? Coupled with this emphasis on women’s sexual pleasure and man’s sexual responsibilities, are representations framing sex as inherently good for you, and more sex as even better for you (Braun et al., 2003). A recent Australian survey of sex and relationships found that the majority of men and women believed having sex was important to their well-being (Smith, Rissel, Richters, Grulich, & de Visser, 2003).

How do men negotiate this plethora of, often contradictory, representations? What are the implications for men’s experiences of their own sexuality, for men’s sexual practice, and for their sexual relations with women? If men accept the expectations produced by representations - but even then, which representations - as reasonable and desirable, what are the consequences? These are the concerns driving the investigation of heterosexual men’s sexual subjectivity and practice that is undertaken in this thesis.

Sex therapist Bernie Zilbergeld suggests “that men have been duped about sex. They have accepted unrealistic, and in fact, super-human standards by which to measure their equipment, performance, and satisfaction. Whatever men do, its somehow not enough, not when compared to the standards they have learned” (1978, p. 17). The view that sexual representations provide inaccurate information echoes much of the literature that will be reviewed in Chapter 2. Thus, Zilbergeld could claim that sexual representations are “hindering us in our search for sexual expression that is a true reflection of ourselves” (p. 17). Consequently, the aim of research in this area has often been to uncover and address the unrealistic expectations created by
representations, by giving men true or accurate information about sex (see the literature on sexual dysfunction reviewed in Chapter 2). This perspective can be characterised as a cultural context approach, and is often adopted by those working within an essentialist perspective, where the role of culture is acknowledged, but is deemed to “come into play after biology has already established the basic parameters” (Tolman & Diamond, 2001, p. 37).

A different perspective is adopted in this thesis. Representations are conceptualised as neither a simple reflection of men’s lives, communicating a truth about how men are, as is suggested in much anti-pornography writing; nor are they conceptualised as sexual myths, merely setting unachievable standards for men. Rather, representations “draw on the available cultural discourses of gender, race, class, age and the like - in short, on those discursive elements which make up our sense of self” (Buchbinder, 1998, p. 26). If representations convey “ways of being” (Parker, 2004, p. 160), then the multiple and contradictory representations that were described earlier - male sexuality as driven, problem-free, undesiring, out of control, dangerous, responsible, skilful - constitute different ways of being, different subjectivities. If representations are part of the cultural resources (discourses) that men draw on to produce sexual subjectivity, then an examination of how they negotiate these multiple and contradictory ways of being is important. It is also important to examine the locally and historically specific sexual representations that are available to men. Moreover, not all representations have equal legitimacy; dominant discourses of masculinity, sexuality and heterosexuality coalesce to produce a dominant representation of heterosexual male sexuality that function as the taken for granted truths (hegemonic male sexuality).

A significant proportion of the research on men’s sexuality has focused on ‘problem populations’ or ‘problem behaviour’, such as sexual dysfunction, sex offenders, or safer sex practices in the context of HIV/AIDS. In an extensive review of contemporary social science research on sexuality in the United States, Diane di Mauro cautions that “while some sexuality research should aim to prevent social problems and/or disease, particularly in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the ramifications of a limited, preventive approach are significant. First, the research questions are focused primarily on identifying high-risk sexual behaviours and/or motivating behavioural change, and second, sexuality is conceptualized within a negative and problematic context” (1995, p. 17). As a consequence “there is a dearth of information about populations not considered to be at risk and a tremendous lack of baseline data about sexuality across the life span” (p. 18). This thesis seeks to address this, by examining sexual subjectivities of men recruited from a general population in a range of different contexts: men in and out of relationships, and of older and younger men.

Michael Flood has noted that whilst there have been a number of large scale quantitative studies of sexuality in Australia (the most recent being Smith et al., 2003), there is less “close-focus” work on the contexts through which sexual meaning is constituted and negotiated. I would suggest that in Australia and New Zealand there is a surprisingly rich body of literature on heterosexual subjectivity (for example L. Allen, 2003a; L. Allen, 2003b, 2004; Braun et al., 2003; J. Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994; Gavey, McPhillips, & Braun, 1999; Gavey, McPhillips, & Doherty, 2001; Hillier, Harrison, & Bowditch, 1999; McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001; Potts, 2002; Roberts, Kippax, Waldby, & Crawford, 1995; Waldby, Kippax, & Crawford, 1993). However, this work has tended to examine specific contexts like HIV/AIDS and safer sex - reflecting the preventative sexual health orientation noted above; focused on emerging sexual subjectivities in young people - reflecting the lack of lifespan focus also noted above; and if not on women, then at least focused on the implications for women. Apart from Flood’s own research, which is on heterosexual men and unsafe sex (2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2003), no Australasian studies have focused exclusively on adult heterosexual men’s sexual subjectivity.
This thesis addresses this by focusing the enquiry on men’s subjectivity, men’s negotiation of sexual representations, and the implications for men.

Thus, as stated earlier, the objective of this thesis is to provide an account of urban Australian heterosexual men’s sexual subjectivity, and explore how it is (re)produced in relation to representations of heterosexual male sexuality in popular culture. This objective is met through the analysis of men’s magazines, individual and group interviews, and a survey.

1.1. Organisation of the thesis

The first part of this thesis - chapters 2, 3 and 4 - set the scene for the later analysis of cultural representations and men’s own accounts. The first two chapters contain a review of the literature relevant to an examination of representations and heterosexual male sexuality. In this review, the way male sexuality has been theorised is established, along with the kind of examination of the relationship between sexuality and cultural representations that this envisages. The review of literature also begins to answer one of the questions driving this thesis - the content of hegemonic representations of male sexuality circulating in contemporary Australia. Psychological, medical and sexological texts articulate particular notions of male sexuality, constituting it in specific and identifiable ways that are available to individual men.

- Chapter 2 focuses on mainstream psychological literature. This encompasses research that has both examined the relationship between representations and sexuality directly, and that which has placed the sociocultural dimension on the periphery. The latter domain of work lays the groundwork for the quantitative examination undertaken in Chapter 8.

- Chapter 3 focuses on social constructionist literature on sexuality. This chapter concentrates on research that has examined the discursive construction of heterosexuality and elucidated the dominant discourses implicated in this construction. Again, this review establishes the framework for the discursive examination of male sexuality undertaken in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
Chapter 4 presents a framework for the analysis undertaken in this thesis; an epistemological structure is developed in which both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to address the same issue. This chapter also addresses important methodological matters of recruitment, ethics, participant demographics and the representativeness of the sample. In this chapter I also present some reflections on the experience of interviewing heterosexual men about their sexuality.

Chapters 5 through 8 constitute the analysis section of the thesis. Chapters 5 and 6 report discursive examinations of textual material. The analyses establish the content of contemporary Australian representations of heterosexual male sexuality. Chapters 7 and 8 address the question at the heart of this thesis by directly examining men’s negotiation of representations and the implications for their experience of their sexuality.

- Chapter 5 presents a discourse analysis of two Australian Men’s magazines - FHM and Men’s Health. The aim of this analysis is to identify the hegemonic discourses operating in the magazines around male sexuality, and discuss the representations that articulate them.
- Chapter 6 mirrors the magazine analysis but focuses on men’s talk around sex and sexuality, in individual and group interviews. A thematic analysis of interview transcripts is undertaken to identify the taken for granted truths about heterosexual male sexuality.
- Chapter 7 builds on the discursive analyses in the preceding chapters to examine the project of subjectification - how men take up the hegemonic truths and discourses around male sexuality, and enact associated practices, to (re)produce a recognisable hetero-sexual subjectivity. This analysis aims to describe the difficulties, conflicts and ambivalences created for men in this process, and consider how this process is different for men in relationships compared to single men. The same set of individual and group interview data is used in this analysis.
- In Chapter 8, a quantitative analysis is conducted on a large-scale survey examining men’s experience of sexuality - as measured by established psychological scales - across four areas. Statistical analysis is undertaken to investigate the relationship between sexuality and men’s endorsement of
hegemonic male sexuality - again using an established scale. This analysis also attempts to explore whether patterns in where men access sexual knowledge are related to differences in their experience of sexuality.

Finally, Chapter 9 reflects on the significant findings from the four analyses chapters and considers the implications of men’s negotiation of cultural representations for their sexual subjectivity. Limitations of the study undertaken here, and some future research directions, are discussed.

1.2. Personal position

Locate the analysis within an account of its production, including relevant constraints, limits and possibilities wrought by our position as analysts. These are issues that might be regarded as the context of the research (Burman, Banister, Parker, & Tindall, 1994, p. 63).

Throughout the research process, there were recurring issues that I found myself considering in difficult moments in the interview, or struggling with during the analysis, or simply talking to colleagues and friends about. The account I undertake here, of my experiences in/of the research, is an attempt to deal with some of the difficulties and contradictions I encountered. As will become evident, these are not simple questions with neat answers, they are rarely resolved; indeed, I often leave them undone, untidy. I feel some ambivalence about collating my reflections in one section - as if the researcher can be excised, contained and accounted for - rather than throughout the thesis. For example, I undertake some reflective work specifically around interviewing men about sex (see below). This reflects both pragmatism - there simply is not space for this, and a concern that reflexivity should not become indulgent - I don’t want to write a thesis on my experience of doing the research. Suffice to say, my voice is present throughout the research reported here, and is also implicated in that which is not reported.

Firstly, it is important to briefly describe the genesis of this research. An application for an ARC funded Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship (APA(I)) was
developed by Jane Ussher, then an Associate Professor at the Centre for Critical Psychology, University of Western Sydney, and Dr Kendra Sundquist, then the Director of Health, Promotions and Marketing at FPA Health, a New South Wales based family planning organisation (the industry partner); funding was granted in 1999. The ARC application laid the foundation for the research described in this thesis; it also reflects the different interests of the industry partner (a large-scale survey study) and the principal investigator (discursive examination of representations and subjectivity). However, whilst not responsible for these foundations, I am solely accountable for the project that subsequently took place. By the time I came onboard as the APA(I) student in mid 2000, Dr Sundquist was no longer working at FPA Health; I am grateful to Dr Edith Weisberg, the Research Director at FPA Health, for maintaining FPA Health’s commitment to this research.

So the journey that lead me to this research topic feels professional (and opportunistic) rather than personal (and invested). It is common advice to potential PhD students to pick a topic that will sustain your passion and interest for what is after all a significant amount of time (Wolcott, 1990). I didn’t, I had no previous academic interest in men or heterosexuality, although my research interests covered sexuality and gender. When I began the research, I felt like I had applied for a job in a related area. I was living in London at the time and the opportunity to move to Australia and work with Assoc Prof Ussher, were perhaps greater attractions. It is worth saying, I feel quite differently about the topic now.

Jennifer Hunt (1989) talks about the culture shock inevitable when a researcher immerses herself in a new research setting; the experience of “being a stranger in an alien and unfamiliar world” (p. 33). This was a very real experience for me throughout the research; having just moved to a new country, I was simultaneously coming to terms with a number of cultures for the first time. A sense of Otherness is perhaps the most acute part of culture shock; I was other to my research topic on a number of levels (I am neither heterosexual nor a man). I sometimes felt like an impostor - I felt I had no personal knowledge to draw on - and waited for the knock on the door “what they hell do you know about heterosexuality/men/sex?”. Uncertainty and anxiety are of course primary characteristics of culture shock; I now feel that becoming familiar with men/heterosexuality was often no different to
working out how to ‘be’ in Australia. There is a certain irony in this, which does not escape me; had I been conducting research in nuclear physics, I suspect my lack of personal experience would not have concerned me. Indeed, in some paradigms my lack of membership of the relevant categories would have been a bonus, granting me extra biasfree kudos. However, my credentials - or lack of - were rarely mentioned; some men expressed general reservations about women conducting research on men but agreed to take part anyway (I do not know if any abandoned an interest on finding out the researcher was a woman). I’m not sure the men I interviewed or spoke to about the study identified me as a lesbian; I never identified myself in this way to any participants.

The only time I had my credentials directly challenged was by a male academic concerned at my lack of direct experience of ever having had an erection - that is, that I was not a man. The universalising assumption in this challenge is of course part of what is so powerful about biological/natural accounts of human experience that reduce male sexuality to a genital experience. Do all men have the same experience of an erection? Does a man experience each erection in the same way? Is it reasonable to assume homogeneity of experience across participants or between researcher and participants? Is a penis the most important, relevant, and meaningful difference between all men and me (or all women, I’m not sure if it was me specifically, all women, or simply all lesbian women, that my colleague was concerned about). The knowledge through experience model suggests that only those who have experienced a phenomena can research it; a position that reifies experience as truth (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004), and has the potential to ghettoise particular groups if there are few people with those experiences available to conduct research. Although I doubt heterosexual men are in danger of becoming ghettoised, I do wonder who would undertake this experiential research; it is interesting that so much of the literature in this area is written by women or conducted within a feminist framework. Many of these issues have been well rehearsed in other areas, such as in disability research, feminist research, particularly around class and ethnicity, or indeed in any standpoint epistemologies (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004), with as many questions raised as answered.
On many levels, then, Otherness was an important element in my research experience. This was often an experience of my Otherness, rather than that of the participants. Otherness is commonly discussed in terms of research on those who are defined as Other to the “dominant social power relations” (Fawcett & Hearn, 2004, p. 203), that is, societal Otherness. Within this conceptualisation, I was the Other to my participants - not Australian, not a man, not heterosexual. This contrasts with a kind of research Otherness, where participants are the subject of research and so can be construed as Other. It is important to note the transient nature of Otherness, however, I also interviewed men who were ethnically and religiously Other, but in relation to whom?

The issue of voice, of who is speaking for whom, of the appropriation of the researched experience, are issues that need to be taken seriously. This is a more straightforward issue for research Otherness, where the power that I have access to as researcher, primarily through my privileged researcher voice, raises important issues. It was important throughout the research to respect men’s experiences and knowledge, to take seriously the accounts (qualitative and qualitative) that they produced for (and with) me. This is not an easy undertaking, and it does not mean simply reproducing the experiences they presented to me. The analysis of data, in this study, involves the interpretation of the accounts men produced, and the participants may not agree with some of these interpretations. It is my responsibility to provide evidence for the interpretations I propose, to acknowledge alternatives and to be very clear about the limits of these interpretations.

A related issue was the struggle I faced reconciling the research topic with my feminism; for example, how I represent the experiences, knowledge and realities of a group whom I perceive to be implicated in, and benefit from, the continued oppression of women (see also Wetherell & Griffin, 1992). Moreover, if I adopt a feminist perspective, do I inform my participants of this? And how do I, indeed should I, apply feminist research principles to research on men? One of the ongoing conflicts I experienced in this research was in resisting women’s voices in the research. For example, it was often suggested that heterosexual couples should be interviewed. My feminist sensibilities are offended that women have been silenced -
I have silenced them. On the other hand, as a feminist researcher I take seriously my responsibility to give voice to my (male) participants.

An important part of any examination of Otherness, is reflecting on the role of our own subjectivity, and this is where the issue becomes less straightforward, for this is where my societal Otherness was particularly relevant. I was quite curious about the lives of my participants, undoubtedly because of my Otherness and lack of knowledge/experience of heterosexual men. In her reflections on interviewing male police officers, Elaine Campbell describes a very familiar experience: I “listened intently to their accounts, questioned their responses, acknowledged their views, and was simultaneously appalled and fascinated by what they had to say” (2003, p. 293). My shock and fascination persisted throughout the research. However, it was often heterosexuality that I felt Other to; indeed, it was heterosexual relationships that I often spoke to colleagues about.

An unexpected experience in discussions with colleagues was the disgust and anger that often flavoured my conversations with heterosexual women. In research seminars and informal discussions, colleagues described feeling sick, dirty, disgusted, horrified, on reading the interview transcripts. One suggested I was ‘brave’ for entering into a study on heterosexual men and sex. Another described reading the interview transcripts as like reading dirty material (erotica) and feeling that she needed to be cleansed - through confession. A few colleagues with teenage daughters described their shock - and fear - upon reading transcripts with men like those their daughters may encounter. Many suggested they knew no men like those in this study, some going so far as to assert they would not be friends with these ‘kinds’ of men. In one seminar that rapidly degenerated into a heated discussion about whether men really had a biological drive, or not; the raw emotion in the room seemed out of proportion. Personally, I rarely had such strong negative responses to the material in this study; I was often shocked but very rarely disgusted. I suspect my lack of intimate relationships with men is strongly implicated in this. Thus, the reflexive work I did for myself did not necessarily bring an awareness of how others may be invested in different accounts of male sexuality.

1 I am very grateful to my supervisor - Jane Ussher - who was invaluable in this undertaking; gently challenging the taken for grantedness in my knowledge.
The responses of my colleagues however did confuse me - for the men in this study are ‘normal’ men, they are - one would presume - not unlike the male partners, teenage sons, brothers, fathers and friends of my heterosexual women colleagues/friends. This reflects a common splitting I encountered when reading the literature in this area. Sexual representations in pornography were often framed as distinct to, rather than extreme versions of sexual imagery in popular culture. The tactics men engage in to coerce an uninterested woman to have sex were framed as distinct to, rather than degrees of persuasion, charm, seduction. In the introduction to *Heterosexuality: A Feminism and Psychology Reader* (1993), Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson report that heterosexual feminists often characterised their male partners as unlike other men - their man was caring, non-oppressive, good, gentle. Thus, there were ‘good’ men - who control their sexual drive, desire but don’t objectify women, and are interested in relationships with (or without) sex; and there are bad men - who think with their penis, want sex but no commitment, and treat women as sexual objects. I would suggest that it is unhelpful, and erroneous, to see the men in this study and the accounts they give as unusual, extreme, or necessarily transgressive. These men are taking up meanings and ways of understanding sexuality that are culturally available to them. Moreover, the accounts that they produced in the context of this research study are not *the* account of their sexuality, it is one of many that was available to them (Hollway, 1989). The negotiation of these accounts is the topic of this thesis.

**Some reflections on interviewing men and interviewing about sex**

There is a small literature on women interviewing men; of the limited literature available, much focuses on interviewing around nonsexual topics (see Campbell, 2003; Layland, 1990; Lee, 1997; McKee & O'Brien, 1983). I was disappointed, but not surprised, that much of this writing was concerned with women’s vulnerabilities and with how women should take precautions; much like the discussion of interview location and my safety I undertake in Chapter 4. When I completed the interview study, I felt it was important to reflect on some of my experiences of interviewing men.
Although many endorse the importance of reflexivity on the part of the interviewer, it is rare to find an examination of the interviewer’s responses to their participants (some notable exceptions include Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Walkerdine, 1997), it is much more common outside psychology, for example in ethnographic work (Kulick & Willson, 1995). Apart from Jennifer Hunt’s (1989) exploration of psychoanalytic aspects of fieldwork, I’m not sure I’ve ever read about how researchers deal with participants they feel uncomfortable around, don’t gel with, or don’t (or indeed do) like.

I found interviewing hard work; it was often intense, challenging (and sometimes scary), fascinating, enjoyable, profoundly disheartening and emotionally draining. Before each interview there was apprehension, often a slight hope that he would cancel/not show (only once did this occur). At the end of each interview, there was a sense of relief - another one done, it went ok, there were no problems; sometimes there was sadness that an enjoyable interaction with an interesting person was over. There were occasions during the individual interviews where I felt compromised - sometimes as a ‘good’ researcher, more usually as a ‘good’ feminist, and very occasionally as a ‘good’ lesbian. Why I felt compromised, and the consequences of this for my continuing interactions with that person, for future interviews, and indeed the analysis, are complex issues.

In one interview for example, a man (Brendan) bombarded me with relentless stories about himself, often ignoring my questions. He was amusing, charismatic, talkative, and often arrogant, inappropriate, and sexist. During the interview, I felt my position as interviewer continually undermined, along with any sense that the interviewer is inherently powerful. The interview was a rollercoaster ride where I never quite had control. It was a profoundly unsettling experience, and yet like a rollercoaster the loss of control was enjoyable in a slightly uncomfortable way; on reflection I suspect there was a kind of relief also in not being responsible for the interview. It was the only interview where I felt I lost control; on the other hand, it produced very interesting and rich data.
I found most men interested and engaged; some were hard work, a very few for the entire interview. Interviewee behaviour that was particularly challenging included repeated yawning and declarations of tiredness, losing their train of thought, having very little to say, and taking mobile phone calls (or worse, guessing who their text message was from). During these moments, I wondered why they bothered attending, what they had hoped to get out of the interview, or worried that they were disappointed with my questions; later I interpreted this behaviour as signs of discomfort, ways of dealing with a stressful or threatening situation. Campbell (2003) talks about participants who granted her an audience rather than participating; she wonders if a different interviewer (older, male, with more status, etc) would have produced a different set of interview relations. Beyond interviewer insecurities there is another interpretation of these behaviours; not every one is capable of the reflexive work required in an interview (Hollway, 1989), or has sufficient mastery of the skills necessary to narrate a story of themselves (Flick, 1998). This may be particularly salient in relation to the topic of sexuality, where it is neither common practice, nor necessarily acceptable, for heterosexual men to examine their own sexuality, particularly outside a sexual encounter.

As with all interviews there were moments of rapport and moments of disjuncture (Campbell, 2003). In research with men, moments of disjuncture are often described in terms of men articulating sexist discourses (as in Campbell, 2003; Lee, 1997), and the same was true in my interviews. Some of these moments were characterised by my identification with the woman a man was talking about (that is, counter-transference (Hunt, 1989)); on reflection, I was aware of this less often than I might have expected. Examples of this include men talking about being unable to understand a woman’s motivation or thinking, or denying a woman’s voice in a particular account; the extreme objectification of women was rare in the individual interviews and tended to be more obvious to me during analysis. Some of the most theoretically useful moments in the interviews, was when a man said something that deeply conflicted with my own position but was so taken for granted (by him) that he did not attempt to justify or explain his position. If I was actively reflective, I tried to pick up on this in the interview; it was more usual for me to notice these moments on reading the interview transcripts where they then became an important part of the analysis.
There were also rare occasions when I experienced a complete disconnection, where I just didn’t know what a participant was talking about; in these moments I felt ill equipped to understand and keenly aware of my ‘alien’ status. Even rereading these some time after the interview, I still experience a sense of bafflement; the struggle of both interviewer and interviewee makes me cringe in retrospect. For example, one man told me a story about his friend who wanted to perform oral sex on his wife for his 50th birthday, he had told all their friends about it, but she refused, as is illustrated in the extract below.

Grant: oh I have a friend (...) and he's a good friend, married for like (...) over twenty five years anyway (...) for his fiftieth birthday all he wanted to do was to be able to perform oral sex on his wife (...) because she had never allowed him to do it (I: hmm) he didn't get his present (...) and you think, that's you know
I: why
Grant: a reasonable expectation
I: of, from him
Grant: yeah (...)
I: so why do you think that she (...)
Grant: no ideas
I: said no
Grant: no ideas (...) and he was quite open about it, everyone knew about it, she knew everyone knew about it (...) and it was openly discussed when (...) in her presence and she just said, awh disgusting, and (...) (I: hmm) you know
I: so it was something that she felt (...) uncomfortable about (...) or
Grant: obviously
I: about herself presumably
Grant: hmm (...) I don't really know (...) yeah (...) how anyone could possibly (...) (I: hmm) especially with some thing to be done to you, not, you know, there no (...) no activity to be undertaken on your part (I: hmm (...) hmm)
yeah so (...) its, it's weird but you know so that's (...) just ahmm (...) hmm
[Change tape]
Grant: ahmm, you know, gift as it were,
I: (laugh) that's what he wanted
Grant: that's what he wanted (...) and so he didn't get it (...)
I: that's quite sad really
Grant: awh, extremely sad (...)

(Individual interview - age 49 & divorced.)

In what was generally a relaxed interview, this interaction felt very awkward, I wasn’t sure why he was telling me this story about his friend. The disconnection becomes more obvious when Grant says he couldn’t understand her reticence, she didn’t have to do anything, she was being done to. I interpret the subsequent gap as the place where I’m supposed to agree, instead I “hmm (...) hmm”. My conflict is around his positioning her as unreasonable for exercising control over her own body and his belief that being done to has no cost or is of less cost than the ‘gift’ her husband desires. In the interaction, I appear at a loss; with no response, he tapers off. The tape is changed, I do not remember the brief conversation during this, and then we return to the denial of the ‘gift’. To my deep embarrassment, I laugh, and sum the situation up as “quite sad”.

I include this extract not only as an example of disconnection but of the dilemmas and conflicts I experienced during the interviewing process, where there are very complex power relations in play. The conflict is produced by the competing positions available to me; in the interaction above, I can identify several competing discourses. A discourse of research ethics, encouraging me to respect a participant who is telling me about his life, conflicts with a feminist discourse that calls on me to challenge the prevailing sexist discourse and the positioning of the woman in the narrative. This feminist discourse is engaged by my identification with the woman in the narrative above, who deserves, and indeed asserts, control over her own body. My own subjectivity as both a woman and a feminist was/is an inescapable part of this research. A male sex drive discourse is also present; the man in the story wants to engage in a sexual practice with a woman who does not desire it, and it is the denial of his desire that is being positioned as unreasonable (and sad). I think my continuing discomfort around this interaction is because I ‘allowed’ the sexist and male sex drive discourses to prevail, and the knowledge that my researcher ethics do conflict with my feminist politics (a conflict I have lived throughout the research study).
Anthropologist Deborah Elliston (cited by Kulick, 1995) describes an incident during her fieldwork in Tahiti, where a man sexually propositioned her. According to Don Kulick, Elliston experiences a dilemma around how to respond to this. Specifically, she must resist responding “as one might at home” because it conflicts with her anthropological knowledge that “one is dealing with culturally grounded interactional forms that one may not fully understand, and with the fear that, therefore, any reaction might be interpreted as a socially destructive over-reaction” (Kulick, 1995). How I might have responded in the interaction cited earlier if I was ‘at home’ is very different to my researcher response; would it have been okay for me to respond in a way that felt appropriate for me but perhaps was a ‘socially destructive over-reaction’ for Grant? How would this sit with my motivation in this research project, which is to understand the ‘culturally grounded interactional forms’ in heterosexual male sexuality? Jennifer Hunt (1989) encountered a similar issue in her research with police officers; she struggled with how to respond to racist language and behaviour. Hunt describes ignoring the behaviour or asking for clarification of the terms being used; she does however articulate a similar concern, that addressing the issue may “undermine friendly relations” (p. 67). Her difficulties signal a possible route through these dilemmas; she describes recognising her responses as moments of intrapsychic and cultural tension, a signal that the topic was worth further exploration. These are problematic issues, and Hunt admits she developed a ‘blindness’ to manage her own discomfort. I don’t have an answer to this dilemma, indeed I suspect it is an ongoing tension inevitable in research where ‘Otherness’ features, and more so research influenced by feminist perspectives.

Deborah Lee’s (1997) reflections on interviewing men about sexual harassment is one of the only non-anthropological papers I found that discussed women interviewing men about sex. Her examination focuses on the vulnerabilities of the interviewer, and generally, on physical threats; she talks about getting in to a car with a man, interviewing men in their home or in her office. Her description of self-presentation was what resonated for me however. She framed thinking about how to present herself in terms of safety strategies “I began to think about how to present myself in order to avoid the potential for trouble” (p. 558). Lee cites the comments of two female researchers who interviewed lone fathers:
The researcher employed a variety of strategies to offset any risk of sexual confrontation: taking conscious decisions about make-up and clothes; and maintaining a ‘professional’ manner when ambiguities arose. (McKee & O'Brien, 1983, p. 158)

I think it is important to say up front that in all of my previous interviewing experience (with men or women, around sex or not) I have considered how to present myself, making a conscious effort to look ‘professional’. This is due to perceptions about my age, I look younger than I am, and a fear that I am often not taken seriously because of my appearance. When thinking about interviewing a range of men, particularly older men, looking like a serious researcher felt important. Lee (1997) describes a dressed down, “plainly and primly”, trousers and t-shirt; I dressed up, wearing office clothes that I felt were certainly more feminine than my usual attire. It is not lost on me that my attempt to look ‘professional’ effectively straightened me out, no pun intended, hiding many indicators of my lesbian identity.

I am interested in reflecting on how to think about being a lesbian and interviewing heterosexual men; although I found no writing on this issue (maybe lesbians don’t do research on heterosexual men). My sexuality was silenced in the research; either by my own lack of a declaration, the absence of visible lesbian coding, for example, in my clothing, or by the assumption of heterosexuality that most women are subject to (Rich, 1980). On a few notable occasions the assumption by a participant that I was heterosexual or at least sexually available, was made obvious; and so it was clear that whilst they may not be my sexual object, I was in the category ‘woman’ and so potentially a sexual object for my participants.

Brendan: hmm (laughs) go on ask me a question, go on, I'm not so shy anymore,
I: well its, its, your, it guess it's my last question
Brendan: yeah
I: hmm (...) I was talking to somebody
Brendan: no I'm working tonight (laughs)
I: (laughs) not bad
This extract raises important questions around participants’ perceptions of confidentiality; I gave the same assurances of confidentiality to all participants. Earlier in Brendan’s interview, he referred to me playing the tape of his interview at the office Christmas party; he suggested I would do this because he had such good stories and it would give everyone a laugh. I suspect there are complex fantasies and fears at work here. On the one hand, wanting to be heard, perhaps to prove his wife wrong (he told me he planned to write a book about his ‘exploits’; and that he wished his wife knew of his successes with ‘other’ women because it would show her that he was not failing sexually, she was). And perhaps wanting to be the most interesting/shocking interviewee (he mentioned a few times that he suspected I had not interviewed anyone like him). On the other hand, fearing that I might play his interview; maybe we - especially male colleagues - would laugh at him, others may not believe him, as I appeared to be doing, or his wife may find out about his affairs and his perceptions of her.

I’m not sure of the genuineness of Brendan’s advance; his reference to others listening to the tape of his interview suggests he may be attempting to meet expectations of heterosexual masculinity, playing up to an external audience. The content of the preceding interview however, would certainly have led me to believe that a sexual advance was likely; he had told me about his numerous affairs. I do wonder about what motivated his inappropriate behaviour, indeed did he think it was inappropriate? In her speculation on why men agree to be interviewed about sex by a
stranger, Juliet Richters provides a possible answer: “It may [be] the frisson of talking dirty to a schoolteacher type” (2001, Chapter 8). My restrained and slightly disapproving response to Brendan - mostly I ignored his overture - suggests I was taking up the position of professional (asexual?) researcher. The irony is that the question I was trying to articulate was about women interviewing men about sexuality. His response to the question was that if men talk to men it’s all about ego and bragging, so talking to women is inevitably more truthful; his positioning me as a possible sexual partner suggests that are other complications to this however. Thus, a further consequence of my participants (silently) positioning me as heterosexual, is that they may position me as desiring them.

At the beginning of this reflexivity section, I mentioned the culture shock I experienced during this research; this was often in relation to heterosexual cultural practices. It was also however, in being positioned in ways that do not reflect the positions I choose for myself or usually inhabit; this was primarily around having my lesbian identity denied because my participants positioned me as heterosexual. The experience of being positioned ‘against my will’, as in the extract above where I am positioned as a sexual object for a heterosexual man, was an unsettling one. Moreover, my own collusion in the silencing of my lesbian identity added to my discomfort. Don Kulick suggests that this is not an uncommon experience, where the demand that researchers establish rapport is it itself a demand for “evasion, concealment, and lying about one’s own opinions, identities, and activities outside the field” (1995, p. 11). This perhaps brings me back to where I started but with few of the questions I raised answered. My aim however was to reflect on some of the dilemmas and ambivalences I experienced in being a lesbian woman interviewing heterosexual men; to begin to acknowledge and explore the role of sexuality, gender, power and desire in research on sex.
Anyone who watches television, goes to the movies, or picks up a magazine knows sex is prominent across all media. Research has shown that some media do incorporate prosocial messages about sex and sexual issues, like the risks and consequences of unprotected sex, but most do not. The messages, whether incorporating positive or negative themes, are seen by many people today, and raise legitimate questions about what effects they have on influencing the behaviours and attitudes of young viewers. (Huston, Wartella, & Donnerstein, 1998)

This chapter examines mainstream psychological research on sexuality. In the first half of the chapter, research that has explicitly examined the role of culture in human psychology and sexual behaviour will be reviewed. Specifically, this examination will begin with studies that have examined the effect of explicit sexual representations (pornography), followed by work looking at sexual representations in more mainstream cultural material (media effects). This latter research has tended to focus on the effect of sexual imagery in television and cinema on young people. Both fields have given little regard to the subjective experience of sexuality, tending to measure sexual activity or attitudes, so research that has looked at men’s experiences will be examined in the second half of the chapter. Specifically, four areas will be reviewed - sexual dysfunction, sexual satisfaction, sexual communication and participation in unwanted sexual activity.
Almost without exception, the research reviewed within this chapter is conducted within a positivist framework, employing quantitative methodologies such as experimental studies and quasi-experimental surveys. In general, the goal of research conducted within this paradigm is to uncover the underlying truths about sexuality and sexual behaviour, to identify factors contributing to that sexual behaviour and sexuality - such as sexual imagery, or to develop cause and effect models.

**2.1. Research focusing on the role of culture in sexuality**

Within the field of media effects, there are two main bodies of literature to explore: youth research and pornography research. Taking very similar theoretical positions, often influenced by Social Learning Theory (SLT) and the more recent Cognitive Social-Learning Theory (CST) (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989, 1997), the same question is posed by both: what effects do cultural representations of sex and sexuality have on the behaviour and attitudes of individuals. Further, both are primarily interested in the potentially negative effects on sexuality, where sexuality is simply operationalised as measurable behaviour and attitudes. The two areas of research examine different cultural domains, with youth research examining material from popular culture - film, television, music and music videos, magazines, and the internet, and pornography research focusing on sexually explicit material in magazines, videos and more recently the internet.

It is important to distinguish between this research, which tends to examine the effect of cultural material on individuals and theorises a rational subject existing separate to culture, and research conducted within cultural psychology or new cultural psychology (Griffin, 2000; Squire, 2000a). Research conducted within the latter approach is reviewed in Chapter 3. All of the research reviewed in this chapter shares a concern with the relationship between the quantity of representations of a particular behaviour or value and the performance of that behaviour or adoption of that value by individual men.
**Pornography**

The most obvious area where the relationship between representations and sexuality and sexual behaviour has been examined is pornography. Empirical research on pornography has overwhelmingly focused on the effects of exposure to sexually explicit material on men’s attitudes and behaviours, usually toward women. A significant proportion has examined issues around violence and aggression. There has been relatively little research on the content or pervasiveness of sexually explicit material.

Pornography is defined by representations of sex and sexuality, though this in itself has been a contentious area. One of the difficulties when examining studies in this area is that it is not always clear what material the researchers have included. Howitt and Cumberbatch (1990) claim that most researchers avoid a detailed definition of pornography, including material that is sexually explicit without attending to intent or content. Different definitions have been utilised by various government commissions on the effects of pornography, in general they all include two characteristics - the intent to arouse sexually and the depiction of sexually explicit representation (Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1990). Many feminist and anti-pornography writers also include ‘demeaning or degrading to women’ in their definition of pornography (Dworkin, 1980; Steinhem, 1983; Vannoy, 1980). In some studies the definitions employed are more evocative, giving a clear idea of the material under scrutiny; for example erotica, degrading pornography, violent pornography (Check & Guloien, 1989; Fisher & Barak, 2001). Others avoid using the term pornography at all, referring instead to sexually explicit material (Goodson, McCormick, & Evans, 2001; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001).

There has been surprisingly little empirical research on the content of pornography; what studies have been conducted tend to concentrate on depictions of violence. As with literature on pornography in general, the findings are contradictory. Some studies have found that images of aggression and violence toward women are prevalent, making up 50% of sexually explicit scenes in videos (Cowan, Lee, Levy,
& Snyder, 1988). Others have found violent images to be rare, making up less than 7% of film content (Palys, 1986; Yang & Linz, 1989) and one in every 3000 pages of Playboy (Scott & Cuvelier, 1987). Barron (2000) suggests that there is significant variety across media; he found violent themes - not only violence against women - in 24% of magazines, 26% of films and 42% of internet newsgroups. He also suggests that in the case of films and the internet, it is likely that the amount of violence reduces as the novelty of a new technology wears off.

The way that analysis on pornography is conducted varies widely, resulting in very different findings. For example, who perpetrates sexual violence, who is the victim, what exactly constitutes a violent theme and whether it is associated with sex or not. Barron (2000) found that in the magazines he analysed, women were far more likely to be depicted in dominant roles; the opposite was true of films and the internet news groups. Soble (1986) reported a similar finding, there were more depictions of men (9%) in submissive roles in images of sadomasochism, bondage or discipline, than of women (7%). There are further methodological issues around how material is categorised with some studies relying on magazines or video covers as an indication of content (for example Winick, 1985).

**Pornography effects**

Empirical studies on pornography and its effects fall into two main areas: crime statistics and incarcerated offenders use of pornography, and experimental laboratory studies on the effect of pornography on aggression, attitudes toward women, and men’s sexuality. The former explores the relationship between sexually explicit material and sexual crimes, whilst the latter is interested in the effect of sexually explicit material on ‘normal’ men.

Some researchers have examined sex crime statistics and the availability of pornography; however the results have been difficult to interpret and there are issues around assumptions of causality (Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1990). Others have explored the use of pornography among sex offenders. These studies tend to find that sex offenders were not exposed to pornography any earlier than non-offenders (Gebhard & Gagnon, 1964), indeed many appear to have been exposed to
pornography at a later age (Cook, Fosen, & Pacht, 1971; Goldstein & Kant, 1973; Kant, 1971; Walker, 1970). One of the criticisms Howitt and Cumberbatch (1990) level against much of the sex offenders research is that it assumes offenders and non-offenders process the material they see in the same way; that is, the focus has been on how much and when different groups are exposed, rather than on how men process this material, or the meanings they attribute to it. This criticism is relevant for most of the psychological research on pornography, and is rarely addressed.

Experimental or laboratory based studies have tended to examine two areas - aggression and attitudes toward women. All of these studies have used pornographic material, but focused either on content that was violent or not violent towards women. In addition to the original studies, there have been a large number of reviews of the evidence reported in the pornography research literature (M. Allen & D'Alessio, 1995; Brannigan & Goldenberg, 1987; Donnerstein & Linz, 1986; Donnerstein, Linz, & Penrod, 1987; Fisher & Grenier, 1994; Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1990; Linz, 1989; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2001). Rather than review all the psychological studies on pornography, a few key findings reported by the review studies will be highlighted here.

Zillmann and Bryant (1984) report that intermediate and massive exposure to pornography leads to lower aggression (participants were given the opportunity to be aggressive toward a same sex confederate) than in a control group; aggression was higher where participants were exposed to bestiality and sadomasochistic films than to a film explicitly depicting oral sex and intercourse. A review of ten studies on non-violent pornography and aggression (usually toward a same-sex confederate) found similar results - most reported a decrease or no change in aggression after exposure (Sapolsky, 1984). Donnerstein et al. (1987) reviewed eight studies that looked at aggression toward women and found that six reported no increase in aggression. There appears to be general acceptance in the literature that non-violent pornography has not been shown to increase aggression (Segal, 1992a); it should be noted that most of the studies examined general aggression rather than sexual aggression.
A number of studies conducted by Donnerstein and colleagues (Donnerstein, 1980; Donnerstein & Berkowitz, 1981; Donnerstein & Linz, 1986) found that after being exposed to a film depicting rape, men were more likely to be aggressive toward a woman than after being exposed to a sex film. Further, men were unlikely to aggress toward a man regardless of the film shown. In these studies, participants were angered in some way before being given the opportunity to aggress; a further study that included a condition where men were not angered, only found an increase in aggression where exposure had been to a rape film where a woman was depicted as enjoying the rape. However, a study in which men were exposed to films over a longer period of time (3 weeks), failed to replicate these findings (Malamuth & Ceniti, 1986).

In addition to aggression outcomes, many of these studies also looked at attitudes toward women, measures include endorsement of rape myths, sexual callousness, and likelihood to rape. The Zillmann and Bryant (1984) study cited above also looked at attitudes toward women. They reported that in the massive exposure condition (4 hours) participants gave lower (hypothetical) punishment to rape offenders and had higher scores on a sexual callousness toward women scale. A review of 14 subsequent studies (Linz, 1989) found that exposure to non-violent films did not appear to have an adverse effect on attitudes to rape or evaluations of victims. However, after exposure to violent films (sex and aggression or violence toward women) negative effects were found. Howitt and Cumberbatch (1990) suggest that Linz has overstated some effects, significant differences being more rare than claimed. Further, a wide range of attitude measures have been used where no effect has been found, and even those that have produced an effect generally fail to shown an effect in non-laboratory based studies.

Aside from aggression and attitudes towards women, research on pornography has generally ignored the impact on men’s subjective experience of their sexuality. One laboratory study looked at the impact on men’s satisfaction with their sexual partners (Zillmann & Bryant, 1988a, 1988b). It was shown that men exposed to non-violent pornography reported lower satisfaction with their sexual partner including their partner’s physical appearance, sexual behaviour, and desire to explore other sexual activities. An earlier Zillmann and Bryant (1982) study found that prolonged
exposure to pornography lead to overestimations of the normality of unusual sexual activities (group sex, sadomasochism and bestiality) and less expectation of sexual exclusivity.

There has been substantial criticism of the results of these laboratory-based studies. The most compelling being the question of the validity of these results outside the controlled environment of the laboratory. Even researchers using this methodology have acknowledged that participants may perceive the consequences of their actions differently when outside a laboratory situation (Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1990). There are also questions about how lasting the effects are - debriefing has reversed increases in rape likelihood (Brannigan & Goldenberg, 1987; Segal, 1992a), and how relevant participant characteristics may be - in some studies men who reported higher rape likelihood after exposure had shown a higher likelihood prior to exposure (Segal, 1992a). Finally, Howitt and Cumberbatch (1990) note that many experimental studies examined aggression, rather than sexual aggression because the work grew out of a theoretical interest rather than a social or political concern.

Finally, the findings reported above tell us something of the effects of enforced exposure (Fisher & Barak, 2001) to usually quite small amounts of pornography in an unnatural setting. Even ‘massive exposure’ in practice translates to very little; for example, Zillmann and Bryant (1984) subjected their participants to six pornographic films for six weeks, this was less than five hours of film in total (Howitt & Cumberbatch, 1990). According to Howitt and Cumberbatch’s review of similar laboratory studies, this is significantly more than usual. However, a serious question needs to be raised about how this compares to the amount, and frequency, viewed by the average pornography user. A study currently being undertaken in Australia, explores some of these questions in particular the viewing habits of pornography users ("Dirty old man myth exposed," 2003).

**Critical evaluation of the research**

The focus of the studies outlined in the section above was to investigate the effects of pornographic images on men’s attitudes and behaviours. Most of the research cited in the sections above can be characterised as having an anti-pornography agenda. The
anti-pornography movement, both feminist and many legal commissions (Ussher, 1997b), has adopted a similar assumption to that used in youth and media effects research: that there is a simple unidirectional relationship between representations and behaviour. The predictions are the same, men do what they see and the more they see the greater the effect; this is a concern because of what is depicted in pornography: the mix of sex and violence and the degradation of women. It is assumed that the images contained in pornography incite men to commit violence against women (Segal, 1992a; Ussher, 1997b).

The empirical studies cited above do not support this position. The assumption that there is a simple and direct relationship between representations and behaviour takes men’s sexuality out of the sociocultural context in which it is enacted, and assumes a simple modelling effect of pornography. It assumes that men always identify with the male character, despite some evidence of men’s shifting identification in their viewing of pornography (Dollimore, as cited by Ussher, 1997b). Further, it ignores psychoanalytic writing on the function of pornography (for example Benjamin, 1995b; Cowie, 1992; Segal, 1992b); in particular the role of fantasy is not examined (Segal, 1990). Segal is also critical of the failure to examine the role of insecurities and fears in men’s use of pornography; as she notes, “in pornographic fantasy women are available, and women are satisfied. Men can passively consume them, hallucinating in their own active engagement” (1990, p. 219).

Treating pornography in isolation is problematic; men are exposed to a broad range of representations which they must negotiate. The anti-pornography position is in danger of treating men as passive dupes. This criticism has been extended by some to a general critique about the way male sexuality is understood in much of the anti-pornography writing (see for example Benjamin, 1995b; Segal, 1990). Anti-pornography writers emphasise the violent and aggressive nature of pornographic depictions, which they characterise as reflecting the violent nature of male sexuality: “the male compulsion to dominate and destroy that is the source of sexual pleasure for men” (Dworkin, 1980, p. 289). Pornographic representations then are seen to both reflect the reality of male sexual desires and reinforce these desires. David Buchbinder (1994; 1998) and Andy Moye (1985) are critical of this essentialist perspective, and the inherently violent nature attributed to male sexuality.
Buchbinder (1998) further questions that way Dworkin in particular treats male sexuality as if it is unchanging, and indeed unchangeable. Anti-pornography feminists may have issued a challenge to the ‘truth’ about women depicted in pornography (Moye, 1985); they have been less concerned with the ‘truth’ about men. Critics of anti-pornography work call for a scepticism about the degree to which representations simply reflect sexual desires, or indeed the truth about men or women. The theoretical perspective taken by the studies cited here often closes down alternative meanings of the images, and ignores the ways in which men may use pornography. Indeed, we know very little about how men use or interpret representations in pornography. The focus in this area of research is on the quantity of specific types of behaviour rather than on their meaning; thus this literature tells us very little about the meaning ascribed by men to this material.

**Media effects**

Within the area of youth research, the media is positioned as having significant influence on sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Brown & Steele, 1995). The media is often used as a tool for promoting health related behaviours (for example drink driving, healthy eating, increasing exercise) and has been a vital instrument for promoting safer sex (Keller & Brown, 2002). It is not only health promotion agencies that see the mass media as a useful tool; decades of research have demonstrated how significant a source it is for young people seeking knowledge about sex and sexuality (Sutton, Brown, Wilson, & Klein, 2002). Identifying exactly where young people have received information about sex and sexuality is an important aspect of this work. The emphasis in much of this research is on the extent to which young people receive accurate and relevant information on sex and sexuality from parents, peers, teachers (Andre, Lund Frevert, & Schuchmann, 1989)

*Sources of sexual knowledge*

There is a large body of work dedicated to identifying the most influential sources of sexual information for young people (Alexander & Jorgensen, 1983; Andre et al., 1989; Coles & Stokes, 1985; S. M. Davis & Harris, 1982; Goldman & Goldman,
1981; Guthrie & Bates, 2003). Usually these studies have attempted to identify the most important source by asking young people to rank a list of potential sources. A number of researchers have extended this to identify the most important sources of information for different topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and sexual problems (for a review of these research findings see Andre et al., 1989). Others have also included alternative sources where young people may receive information, such as books, family planning organisations, doctors, churches and prostitutes (Andre et al., 1989; Coles & Stokes, 1985). In one retrospective study, Ansuini, Fiddler-Woite, and Woite (1996) found that for 700 men and women the primary source of information changed with age: for those aged 9 to 19 it was siblings, aged 20-29 it was teacher, and those aged 30 and above ‘other’. Overall, 43% of men (the highest percentage) reported the source as ‘other’, that is not a sibling, teacher, parent, or adult relative. Ansuini and her colleagues did not speculate on what makes up this large category.

The limiting of sources to formal education programs or other sanctioned sources like parents is problematic. The knowledge provided by these sources presents a particular picture of sexuality. Parents and educators may give functional information (Ashcraft, 2003) emphasising health and risk rather than pleasure (Ballard & Morris, 1998; Brunner, 1992; Kirby & Coyle, 1997; Trudell & Whatley, 1991). As Catherine Ashcraft notes, in sex education programs “information is usually limited to biological or technical topics, such as anatomy, reproduction, and contraception and is presented in language that is presumed to be neutral and scientific (2003, p. 42). This is clearly a very different set of sexual messages than might be conveyed by music videos, movies or magazines.

Along with other researchers, Ashcraft (2003) argues that popular culture is a very significant domain for young people seeking information about sex and sexuality (Carpenter, 2001; Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1994; McRobbie, 1994; Willis, 1990). Research that has included mass media has found it is often rated as one of the top sources of information, often equal to family, peers and school (Ballard & Morris, 1998; Kaiser Family Foundation, 1997; Keller & Brown, 2002). Moreover, some research studies with young people suggest that boys are less likely than girls to receive sex education at home, and are therefore more reliant on peers and the media
(Chambers et al., 2004). In a review of literature from the 1970s onwards, Sutton et al. (2002) note that the top four sources for young people have been peers, parents, school, media, though the order of importance varies. However, even where popular culture is recognised as a potential source of knowledge, the list of sources provided is often limited. Erotica and pornography are rarely if ever included. There is some research to suggest that young people do use pornography as an information source (Duncan & Donnelly, 1991; Duncan & Nicholson, 1991; Trostle, 1993, 2003). This suggests a significant source of sexual information remains outside the research picture. Sutton et al. (2002) suggest that the concern in much of the research in this area is that young people may be receiving inaccurate information about sex, or that parents are not the primary source. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that the focus of research has been on health and function rather than pleasure, or that it has ignored transgressive representations of sexuality, for example those found in pornography.

**Sexual content of media**

There is no question that depictions of sex and sexuality are ubiquitous in popular culture; recent studies of the sexual content of media demonstrate just how pervasive images and talk of sexuality are. The vast majority of this research has used content analysis, counting instances of depictions or references to sex or sexuality (Pardun, 2002). This research has normally been conducted as part of work on young people, which has influenced the selection of media; with audience figures used to determine the most popular television programs amongst a particular age group (Huston et al., 1998). However, young people do not exclusively use the material analysed in this research.

Although it is the domain generating the most amount of concern (Stern & Handle, 2001), there is little systematic analysis of sexuality in movies (Brown, 2002). Some authors have used industry statistics, for example the fact that 60% of Hollywood movies are R-rated, in making arguments about the prevalence of sex in film (Greenberg et al., 1993, as cited by Brown, 2002). Television, music and music videos however have received considerably more research attention; the vast majority of this has been conducted on American media.
A 2001 study found sexual content in more than two thirds of programmes on American television, with depictions of intercourse in one in every ten shows (Kunkel, Cope-Farrar, Biely, Farinola, & Donnerstein, 2001). The results of previous studies suggest that this reflects a significant rise in sexual content; one previous study of 942 American television programs revealed that 54% of all programs contained some talk of sexuality (Kunkel et al., 1999). As would be expected, there were differences across genres. Soap operas have been shown to have more sexual content than other programs (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993; Greenberg & D'Alessio, 1985); with one study reporting that in one hour of soap opera, there are up to 10 instances of sexual behaviour (Greenberg & Busselle, 1996; Heintz-Knowles, 1996).

Researchers have also looked at the context of sexual depictions. In much of the cultural material examined, sexual activity usually took place between people who were not married to each other (Greenberg & D'Alessio, 1985; Lowry & Shidler, 1993; Sapolsky, 1984; Sapolsky & Tabarlet, 1991; Strasburger, 1995), and sex was often portrayed between people who did not maintain their relationship after sex (Kunkel et al., 2001). Research has also shown that many portrayals of sexual activity do not address its potential consequences, such as pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (Brown, 2002; Kunkel, Cope, & Colvin, 1996; Lowry & Shidler, 1993; Lowry & Towles, 1989; Sapolsky & Tabarlet, 1991).

Research has also shown that sex or sexuality are by far the most popular topic in music and music videos. In general, approximately three quarters of the videos on MTV depict sex or sexuality (Sherman & Dominick, 1986, as cited by Committee on Communications American Academy of Pediatrics, 1995; Huston et al., 1998). An analysis of top twenty singles each year in the 1980s found sexuality was the main theme in 72% of songs (E. Edwards, 1994). Portrayals of sexuality in music videos vary greatly across genre: 50% of pop videos contained references to sexuality compared to 8% of heavy metal (Tapper, Thorson, & Black, 1994). A later study of 202 videos on popular music channels found rap and hip-hop contained the most occurrences of simulated intercourse, simulated oral sex, simulated masturbation, and sexual dancing (K. Jones, 1997). This suggests that young people, and indeed
anyone engaging with this material, are being bombarded by representations of sexuality on a regular basis.

**Media effects**

Whilst there has been extensive research on young people’s use of the mass media for sexual information and on the sexual content of mass media, there has been less research on its impact on young people (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002). The research which has been conducted often has an alarmist tone (McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Wartella, 1998), focusing on the impact of media messages in undermining sex education programs (Visser & van Bilsen, 1994), or in influencing earlier sexual activity or producing more liberal attitudes (Sutton et al., 2002). This is a concern because popular media often ignores the potential consequences of sexual activity, for example pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (Brown, 2002; Huston et al., 1998). Underlying this is a fear that young people will accept the representations they see on television or other media as reflections of reality. Soap operas have often been criticised for promoting promiscuity without attending to contraception or sexually transmitted infections (Lowry & Towles, 1989). The results of a number of studies back up this charge, finding that soap opera viewers tend to overestimate the prevalence of a range of sexual activities in the population (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Mayes, 1981; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993); though clearly there are issues about how the actual incidence of specific sexual activities in the general population are measured. More importantly, the question of why the overestimation of these activities is a concern is rarely addressed.

Concerns about the extent to which young people see television as depicting reality apply differently to different genres. For example, talk shows and reality TV explicitly claim to depict reality. A study by Davis and Mares (1998) found that talk show viewers tended to overestimate the frequency of infidelity, teenage sex, and teenage pregnancy in real life. To date, reality shows are an almost entirely unexamined area. By their very nature, these shows claim to be portraying ‘real’ and not fictional lives and experiences. A significant amount of the interest in these shows has been around their sexual content, and the possibility of seeing ‘real’ sex. The Australian version of *Big Brother* had a weekly uncut-show, the content of
which is almost entirely sexual; the highlight of the second series was the excitement around the meaning of the “dancing doona”. In many of these shows, the central tension is around sexual relationships. One of the more extreme examples of this genre, *Temptation Island*, involved sending both members of a heterosexual couple to separate luxury resorts where several sexy singles tempted them to be unfaithful. Other reality shows like *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Average Joe*, *Paradise Hotel*, and the most recent *There’s Something About Miriam*, are superficially about relationships, but the sexual element is clearly central.

Research on young people and the consequences of exposure to sexual media has been concerned with both behaviour and attitudes. Brown (2002) reports that particular viewing patterns have been shown to influence both of these outcomes. Higher television viewing has been linked to early sexual intercourse in high school students (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Collins et al., 2004; Peterson, Moore, & Furstenberg, 1991); and generally watching television laden with sexual activity has been shown to be associated with increases in sexual behaviour (Buerkel-Rothfuss & Strouse, 1993). However, the correlational nature of most of this research means that direction of this relationship is unknown.

*Critical evaluation of the research*

There are a number of criticisms that can be levelled at the media effects research conducted on young people; many the same as those applied to the pornography research reviewed earlier. One of the most fundamental criticisms, concerns the direction of the relationship between exposure and behaviour. It is assumed that exposure to representations in popular culture produces behaviours or attitudes, or results in behaviour or attitude change. This has been a particular concern in relation to earlier participation in sexual intercourse (Collins et al., 2004). However, some writers have suggested that those engaging in sexual intercourse earlier may be drawn to so called ‘sexy television’ because it is depicting their experience (Huston et al., 1998).

\(^2\) The implication being that the movement of bedclothes indicated sex was occurring between two housemates.

\(^3\) A group of young heterosexual men compete for the affections of a beautiful young woman who turns out to be a pre-op male to female transsexual.
David Gauntlett (1995; 2002) has been a particularly strong critic of media effects research. Of the many criticisms he puts forward, four are particularly relevant here. Much media effects research examines social problems that Gauntlett claims are seen as the “evil magic products of popular culture” (2002, p. 30). There is little attention to the social causes of problems. Indeed a cursory glance at the effects or outcomes examined by the studies reviewed above reveals a very limited agenda: age at first intercourse being the chief behavioural outcome. Attitudinal outcomes are also examined and the areas covered are similarly restricted; the main attitudes examined relate to premarital sex, abortion, condom use, women and monogamous relationships (Huston et al., 1998). There is no attention to the successful negotiation of sexual situations, the negotiation of mutual pleasure, or to positive outcomes of sexual activity. The focus on negative consequences of sexual activity is prevalent.

A second criticism is at the methodological level. Gauntlett questions the usefulness of focusing on exposure to one particular medium in isolation from the others. Young people are exposed to a broad range of representations about sex and sexuality, not just in popular culture, but also from school-based sex education programs, peers and family; all of this knowledge may be brought to bear on any decisions or behaviour relating to sex. Underlying this methodological approach is a simplistic understanding of the relationship between exposure and outcome, as well as a denial of the sociocultural contexts in which people experience sexuality and make sexual decisions.

A third criticism reinforces the criticisms made of pornography literature that positions men as passive dupes. Media effects literature positions the audience as “passive, ignorant and undiscerning sponges” (Gauntlett, 1995, p. 10), unable to negotiate critically the messages popular culture communicates. Qualitative research that has examined individual’s knowledge, meanings and interpretations suggests audiences are far from passive dupes. For example, Wray and Steele (2002) examined young women’s negotiation of images of femininity in *Cosmopolitan* through their production of online zines; the young women’s critiques and resistance to representations were central to this negotiation.
A final criticism made by Gauntlett relates to context. There is a tendency to treat the object under study, in this case ‘sex’, as if its meaning is the same across all contexts. A related critique could be levelled at the method of conceptualising and analysing ‘sex’ in this area of research. The conventional method for analysing material is content analysis; a method that often substitutes frequency, for meaning or interpretation, and removes context. This suggests the meaning of something, an interaction between two people in a television drama for example, can be found in the depiction. Thus, all instances of sex are positioned as having the same meaning. Further, there is no examination of how these various instances of sex are interpreted, differently, by the audience; there is an assumption that all people will have the same responses to the same material (Cumberbatch & Howitt, 1989). Indeed, research that has looked at the meaning of sexual material, has tended to demonstrate a very broad range of interpretations amongst an audience (see Buckingham, 1993; A. Gray, 1992; Palmer, 1986; Schlesinger, Dobash, Dobash, & Weaver, 1992). An oft-cited example is the different meanings young people ascribed to Madonna’s *Papa Don’t Preach* music video. Young white women thought Madonna was singing about wanting to keep her unborn child; young black men thought she was singing about wanting to keep her boyfriend (Brown & Schulze, 1990).

These criticisms raise the question of how useful these studies are for considering the relationship between representations and sexuality. The most significant problem is the emphasis on frequency of sexual representations, rather than on the meaning of these representations. Secondly, there is a problem with the way sexuality is conceptualised, and in the focus on behavioural outcomes and attitudes. The examination of the relationship between cultural representations and sexuality is simplistic, assuming that higher exposure to sexual content will result in a higher incidence of that specific sexual behaviour and greater endorsement of the values depicted (Brown, 2002). This assumes that the values and messages depicted on television are homogenous and straightforward, and that every depiction of sexual activity has the same meaning, the differences only being how explicit it is, who instigated it, and whether risks and responsibilities are addressed.
2.2. Research focusing on sexuality

The literature examined in this section explores different dimensions of sexuality - sexual dysfunction, unwanted sexual activity, sexual satisfaction and sexual communication. In the first area - dysfunction - gender is central. The model of male sexuality adopted in this area is physiological, so the male experience of both functional and dysfunctional sexuality is framed very differently to the female experience. This contrasts with the three other areas, where gender is of little interest, or where the focus is on gender differences; this literature rarely examines men’s experience of sexuality ‘as a man’. The aim in this section is to briefly examine the major debates and findings in each area, and then to explore more closely what this tells us about male sexuality and the role of the sociocultural.

Sexual dysfunction

In a genealogy of sexual science, Annie Potts (1999) proposes that contemporary theories of sexual dysfunction share a number of key principles. Firstly, a biological model of sexuality: sexual desire is a basic, biological drive, where a man’s drive is usually considered stronger, and more urgent, than a woman’s (M. Jackson, 1987). The reproductive imperative is central to this, such that sex is primarily a functional act designed for the reproduction of the species; this is closely allied with evolutionary theories of sexuality. Secondly, an orgasmic imperative: the pursuit of the ideal orgasm, which is both the goal and the most intense part of sex. In much sex research, the orgasm is the index of sexual achievement (Nicholson, 1993). Finally, a coital imperative: the privileging of heterosexual intercourse as the “most natural form of (hetero)sexual activity” (Potts, 1999, p. 37). The slippage between the meanings of sex and intercourse/coitus is a good example of this. Having ‘sex’ is commonly taken to mean vaginal-penile intercourse (Bogart, Cecil, Wagstaff, Pinkerton, & Abramson, 2000; Gavey et al., 1999; Hillier et al., 1999), with other sexual practices relegated to ‘foreplay’ (M. Jackson, 1984). Moreover, Potts argues that the dysfunctions that sex therapy focuses on further reinforces the positioning of intercourse as central. Premature ejaculation, and erectile dysfunction are understood
in terms of intercourse (M. Jackson, 1984, 1987; Segal, 1994; Tiefer, 1986, 1988). For example, in the epidemiology studies reported below, erectile dysfunction is defined as “erections that are inadequate for intercourse” (Bokhour, Clark, & Inui, 2001, p. 649); a definition that prioritises intercourse and ignores the subjective experiences of men.

The Human Sexual Response Cycle (HSRC) described by William Masters and Virginia Johnson (1966), which builds on work by Havelock Ellis and Alfred Kinsey, is unquestionably the bedrock of mainstream conceptualisations of sexual dysfunction (B. L. Marshall, 2002; Tiefer, 1988, 1991). Although this is a physiological model of sexuality - and of sexual response - it is the model on which much clinical psychological treatment and research is based (Petrak & Keane, 1998; Potts, 1999); indeed, it is central to the assessment of sexual dysfunction (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Many self-help books for men present this model of sexuality as the universal truth about all men - it is what ‘naturally’ happens to a man’s body when he is sexually aroused (Llewellyn-Jones, 1981). This physiological model of sexuality describes four stages of sexual arousal: excitement - responding to sexual stimulation; plateau - sexual arousal and desire intensify; orgasm - orgasm occurs; and resolution - the body returns to an unstimulated state. Sexual dysfunction is now broadly understood as a failure to progress through the stages of the HSRC (Potts, 1999; Tiefer, 1988), as a deviation from the standard of function outlined by the model (B. L. Marshall, 2002). This view of sexuality has a long history, as Margaret Jackson (1994) suggests in her review of 20th century sexology.

One of the consequences of the HSRC as the primary model of sexuality is that male sexuality is largely reduced to genital function (Tiefer, 1995), with intercourse the goal (B. L. Marshall, 2002). Moreover, the physiological basis of this model - where sexuality is reduced to innate drives - means that men’s need and desire for sex is unquestioned (Hare-Mustin, 1991). The biological, and corporeal, focus of much sexual dysfunction writing thus obscures sociocultural dimensions (Tiefer, 1996; Tiefer & Kaschak, 2001; Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Indeed, Potts (1999) notes that in the most recent version of the DSM (IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), the term psychosexual dysfunction has been replaced with sexual dysfunction; she argues this reflects the framing of sexuality as a biological construct. Thus, this
model is heavily implicated in how we understand the causes and consequences of sexual difficulties. This model also has significant consequences for both how we conceptualise sexual function and dysfunction, indeed what is defined as functional, and so ‘normal’, is quite restricted. As will become clear in the section below, a very large proportion of men have sexual experiences that are constituted as sexual dysfunction; thus, it is important to examine the sexual dysfunction literature.

The prevalence of sexual dysfunction

Various authors have suggested that the incidence of male sexual problems is between 10 and 52% (Laumann, Paik, & Rosen, 1999; Ventegodt, 1998). Yet, representative population studies on the incidence of sexual dysfunction are relatively rare (Richters, Gruilich, De Visser, Smith, & Rissel, 2003). Four international representative studies strongly suggest that the experience of sexual problems is relatively common - Sweden 23%, Denmark 26.9%, America 31%, Australia 46.5% (Fugl-Meyer & Fugl-Meyer, 1999; Laumann et al., 1999; Richters et al., 2003; Ventegodt, 1998). However, in these four studies the assessment of sexual dysfunction does not meet the clinical criteria of sexual dysfunction as defined by the DSM IV. Moreover, comparisons of their specific findings are hampered by the different methods utilised to measure sexual problems. The American study - the National Health and Social Life Survey conducted with 1410 men - reported 10% of men experienced erectile dysfunction, 16% a lack of interest in sex, 17% performance anxiety and 29% orgasming too soon (Laumann et al., 1999). The Danish study, with 741 men, found 3.2% of men experienced reduced sexual desire, 4.9% premature ejaculation, and 5.4% difficulties achieving an erection (Ventegodt, 1998). In the Swedish study, 5% reported erectile difficulties, and 9% performance anxiety (Fugl-Meyer, 1999, as cited by Richters et al., 2003). The most recent study, a representative sample survey with 10173 Australian men, found that 9.5% of men reported problems keeping an erection, 15% felt anxious about their sexual performance, 23.8% orgasmed too quickly and 24.9% experienced a lack of interest in sex (Richters et al., 2003).

The representative studies cited above suggested between 5 and 10% of men experienced difficulty attaining or maintaining an erection. However, erectile
dysfunction is a sexual problem that is strongly associated with aging. The Massachusetts Male Aging Study (Feldman, Goldstein, Hatzichristou, Krane, & McKinlay, 1994), reported 52% of men aged 40 to 70 years had some form of erectile dysfunction, with 34.8% reporting moderate to complete erectile dysfunction. The study authors reported that erectile dysfunction rose to 60% in men aged over 60 years. These findings support the results of other research that has found the incidence of sexual dysfunction increases with age (Davidson, Kwan, & Greenleaf, 1982; Laumann et al., 1999; Marsiglio & Donnelly, 1991; Marsiglio & Greer, 1994; Richters et al., 2003; Schiavi, Schreiner-Engel, Mandell, Schanzer, & Cohen, 1990; Segraves & Segraves, 1992). Laumann estimates that men aged over 50 years, are three times more likely to experience erectile dysfunction than men aged under 30 years.

Two community studies have examined the incidence of erectile dysfunction in Australia and both reinforce the finding of increasing incidence as men age (Ford, Nassar, Sullivan, Chambers, & Lancaster, 2003). In one community study in South Australia, that surveyed men aged over 40 years, Pinnock and her colleagues (1999) reported a prevalence of erectile dysfunction in men aged 40 to 49 of 3%; this rose to 42% in 60 to 69 year olds and 64% in 70 to 79 year olds. The second study, with 1240 men attending doctor’s surgeries in Perth, found 40% of men reported difficulties obtaining or maintaining an erection (Chew, Earle, Stuckey, Jamrozik, & Keogh, 2000). Again, the incidence was shown to increase with age; from 2% in the 40 to 49 age group to 50% in the 70 to 79 age group.

These studies demonstrate that most men will experience some form of erectile dysfunction in their lifetime, with the likelihood increasing dramatically with age. Some researchers suggest that the relationship between sexual dysfunction and aging is in part due to the diseases associated with aging (Mulligan, Retchin, Chinchilli, & Bettinger, 1988). Sexual dysfunction has been shown to be associated with heart disease (Huws, 1991), prostate cancer (Bokhour et al., 2001; Schover et al., 2004), diabetes (Hackett, 1996), and depression (Labbate, Croft, & Oleshansky, 2003; Nicolosi, Moreira, Villa, & Glasser, 2004; Nurnberg, 2003).
The role of sociocultural factors in sexual dysfunction

Research on the causes of erectile dysfunction has, in the main, concentrated on organic or iatrogenic factors. However, it is research on psychogenic factors that has considered the role of the sociocultural in both the aetiology and maintenance of sexual dysfunction.

Bernie Zilbergeld’s (1978; 1999) writings in this area have been particularly influential, with researchers exploring the importance of the ‘fantasy model of sex’. Zilbergeld theorised that men experiencing sexual dysfunction may have inaccurate knowledge or beliefs about male sexuality and that these misconceptions have come from cultural sources such as film, popular literature, pornography and sexual humour. He described nine myths that make up the fantasy model of sex depicted in popular culture: men should not have or express emotions; in sex performance counts; a man must orchestrate sex; a man always wants and is ready for sex; all physical contact must lead to sex; sex equals intercourse; sex requires an erection; good sex is a linear progression of increasing excitement terminated by orgasm; sex should be spontaneous and natural. Variations on these myths have been discussed by other authors (Doyle, 1983; Flood, 1995; Kimmel, 1990; Llewellyn-Jones, 1981), but Zilbergeld’s myths have formed the basis of empirical research in this field.

A few empirical studies have examined the role of social and cultural expectations in the aetiology and treatment of sexual dysfunction. A study conducted by Baker and De Silva (1988) in the UK with men (average age 42 years) referred for evaluation of sexual dysfunction, found that those with sexual dysfunctions held a greater belief in a range of sexual myths related to traditional notions of male sexuality than a matched control group. The greatest disparity was on three myths: sex requires an erection; sex equals intercourse; in sex performance counts. In a study with older men (average age 56.6 years) attending a clinic for evaluation of sexual dysfunction, Adams et al. (1996) assessed the degree of belief in a range of sexual myths, and knowledge about behavioural and medical factors implicated in erectile dysfunction. They report that men’s knowledge was not inaccurate and that overall they did not believe in sexual myths. However, supporting the findings of Baker and De Silva,
there was general endorsement of the importance of intercourse for a couple’s sexual satisfaction. Unfortunately, Adams et al. did not compare the knowledge of the sexually dysfunctional men with a control of non-dysfunctional men. These are small surveys on clinical samples; neither study conducted a follow-up post treatment to see if beliefs had changed. These initial studies suggest that the role of cultural expectations on the experience of sexual dysfunction is worth exploring further; in particular to examine the sexual beliefs of men experiencing problems but not seeking help, or sexually functional men.

Research on the significance of an erection in men’s understandings of their sexuality and masculinity, and the subjective experience of sexual dysfunction, also demonstrates the importance of sociocultural factors. A number of authors have noted that erectile dysfunction is experienced by men as deeply humiliating (Doyle, 1983; Frachner & Kimmel, 1998; Person, 1980; Segal, 1990; Tiefer, 1986). An ‘ill-performing’ penis is often perceived as a failure of masculinity (Bokhour et al., 2001; Fergus, Gray, & Fitch, 2002; Symonds, Roblin, Hart, & Althof, 2003), such that “all men regard the loss of erection not only as signalling the end of their sex life, but also as an emasculating slur on their manhood” (Ellis, 1980, p. 238 as cited by Kimmel, 1990). It is argued that men may feel they are failing to live up to the expectations of masculinity (Kimmel, 1990; Tiefer, 1986; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999) and are likely to withdraw from their partner or become depressed (Pridal, 2001).

The sociocultural dimension is not only relevant for understanding men’s responses to sexual dysfunction, however. Baker and De Silva (1988) argue that it is an important aspect of treatment, as belief in sexual myths may hinder the successful management of sexual dysfunction. A similar argument has been made by others (for example Frachner & Kimmel, 1998; Pridal, 2001). Subsequent research lends support to this argument, finding that expectations of hegemonic masculinity prevent men from seeking help for sexual problems (Inhorn, 2002).

These studies suggest that sexual myths and beliefs about male sexuality may be implicated in the production and maintenance of sexual dysfunction. However, implicit in much of this writing is the construction of normal male sexuality as a natural expression, with cultural myths containing inaccurate knowledge that
intervenes, and contributes to sexual problems. This a position common in sex research, where sexual responses are positioned as a natural unconditioned reaction, whilst “dysfunctional symptoms are learned inhibitions” (Leeming & Brown, 1992, p. 285; as cited by Potts, 1999, p. 34). This reflects the position of Masters and Johnson who theorised that psychosocial factors were responsible for the inhibition of the normal sexual functioning they outlined in their HSRC (Potts, 1999). Tolman and Diamond note that those working within essentialist perspectives on sexuality often acknowledge that sociocultural factors have a role in sexuality, but that they “come into play after biology has already established the basic parameters” (2001, p. 37).

A related area of work is cross-cultural research on sexual dysfunction, though there is limited literature available (Petrak & Keane, 1998). Research with South Asian (Bhugra & Buchanan, 1989; Bhugra & de Silva, 1993; Gupta, 1994) and Turkish (Basoglu, Yetkin, Sercan, & Karaduman, 1986) men has demonstrated cultural differences in the presentation, maintenance and treatment of sexual problems. Models for understanding sexuality and dysfunction also vary (Bhugra & Buchanan, 1989; de Silva & Dissanayake, 1989; Petrak & Keane, 1998). For example, in the Hindu Ayurvedic system of medicine, erectile dysfunction is seen as the result of “excessive sexual intercourse, unsuitable diet, too much exercise, extra-vaginal intercourse … grief and anger” (Petrak & Keane, 1998, p. 14). These studies suggest that political, social and cultural values are central to understandings of sexual problems (Bhugra & de Silva, 1993; Petrak & Keane, 1998). Finally, as suggested above, culture is also relevant to the appropriateness of men’s responses to various treatment options, with, for example, many treatment options requiring masturbation or the participation of a partner (Ghosh, Duddle, & Ingram, 1985; Gupta, 1994).

**Critical evaluation of the research**

Critical assessments from those working within constructionist and feminist frameworks were raised at the start of this review of sexual dysfunction research. These critiques tend to centre on the positioning of male sexuality as purely or chiefly biological and oriented to reproduction, with the attendant privileging of intercourse, and the reduction of male sexuality to a penis capable of erection and
penetration (as outlined above). Within this model of male sexuality, the flaccid penis is seen as a problem in need of treatment, regardless of a man’s perception or the cause (Kleinplatz, 2004). Leonore Tiefer (1986; 1988; 1991; 1995; 1996; 1997; 2004) has been a vociferous critic of the medicalisation of male sexuality. Tiefer’s primary critiques are that treatment options take the penis out of the context of the body, the relationship between the man and his partner, and the sociocultural context in which the relationship is conducted (1991), such that male sexuality becomes the “performance of fragmented body parts” (p. 13). Consequently, the examination of sexual dysfunction becomes the assessment of these body parts rather than an examination of men’s subjective experiences.

A related issue is that where the physical is privileged over the subjective, an erection becomes merely a physical phenomenon (Tiefer, 1997). A possible consequence of which is that medical treatments whilst successfully treating erectile dysfunction - that is, ensuring a reliable erection - do not have good long-term patient compliance (Althof & Turner, 1992; Althof et al., 1989; Delizonna, Wincze, & Litz, 2001; Hanash, 1997; Irwin & Kata, 1994; Manning, Spahn, & Juneman, 1998), with some suggesting attrition rates of 50-60% (Wlasowicz, 2002). The most well known pharmacological treatment, Viagra, has a very low repeat prescription rate (Morgentaler, 2003). The issue here is that while interventions based on a strictly physiological or essentialist model of sexuality can produce an erection, they cannot “create love, intimacy, or desire” (Morgentaler, 2003 quoted by Bradley, 2003). Indeed, Tolman and Diamond (2001) have highlighted the general lack of theorising around sexual desire in sex research; which is particularly surprising given that low desire, and not erectile dysfunction, has been repeatedly reported to be the most significant concern in the general population (Aschka, Himmel, & Ittner, 2001; Laumann et al., 1999; B. L. Marshall, 2002; Richters et al., 2003; Simons & Carey, 2001; Spector & Casey, 1990).

In a comparison of men’s experiences of mechanically and erotically produced erections, Delizonna, Wincze and Litz (2001) found that while the penile vacuum did produce an erection there was no accompanying subjective state of arousal. That is, the mere presence of an erect penis was not sufficient to create a sense of sexual arousal in these men. Or as Barbara Marshall puts it, “the assumption seems to be
that if you can get the penis ‘functioning’ properly, desire will follow and/or simply be enacted” (2002, p. 137). This expectation that an erection will evoke feelings of sexual arousal is only intelligible in a model of male sexuality that sees arousal as purely physical and genital, and unconnected to emotion or relationships⁴. Moreover, the lack of attention to subjective experience and meaning leads to a situation where all sexual arousal is positioned as being the same. The use of erotic videos in laboratory studies, to stimulate erotic arousal, presupposes that the arousal produced - often defined as the presence of an erection - is the same as would be produced in sexual activity with a desired and perhaps deeply loved partner.

The exclusive focus on physiology and on quantification, on the penis as the site of male sexuality, and on prevalence rather than meaning, presents the most significant impediment to applying this research, and the theoretical models employed, to an exploration of cultural representations and men’s sexual subjectivity. With the exception of the small amount of cross-cultural research, work on men’s experience of sexual dysfunction, and clinical research on sexual beliefs and myths, there was an overwhelming lack of attention to meaning, expectations and sociocultural dimensions. This leaves the realm of men’s experience and the relevance of sociocultural representations unexplored.

**Sexual satisfaction**

In contrast to sexual dysfunction research, meaning has been a central concern in sexual satisfaction research, with considerable debate about the way sexual satisfaction has been theorised (M. Young, Luquis, Denny, & Young, 1998). There is particular controversy surrounding the fact that characteristics that contribute to sexual satisfaction are also used to measure sexual satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Orgasmic consistency, for example, has been used as an indicator of sexual satisfaction, but has also been shown to contribute to satisfaction (M. Young et al., 1998). Sexual satisfaction has been defined as the absence of dissatisfaction (Renaud,

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⁴ Marshall (2002) suggests that a shift away from psychological aetiologies occurred in sexual medicine in the early 1980s when Dr Giles Brindley injected a new drug into his penis in front of colleagues at a conference. Marshall argues that the consequence of the resulting erection “was to visibly sever the mechanism of penile erection from any sort of psychological or emotional arousal, or even tactile stimulation, and to reconceptualize it as a primarily physiological event” (p. 136).
Byers, & Pan, 1997), or more simply as when one is satisfied (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1979). Lawrence and Byers claim the definition of sexual satisfaction employed by researchers has often been simplistic, tautological, or absent; they propose the following definition:

An affective response arising from one’s subjective evaluation of positive and negative dimensions associated with one’s sexual relationship. (Lawrance & Byers, 1995, p. 268)

The primary advantage of this definition is that it does not limit satisfaction to physical aspects of sexual relationships but places subjective evaluation at the heart of sexual satisfaction, such that whatever is important to the individual becomes the focus. This definition is sympathetic to the focus of the current research, sexual subjectivity, in that it allows for the examination of the role of cultural representations in men’s evaluations of sexual satisfaction.

Factors contributing to sexual satisfaction

Empirical research on sexual satisfaction has largely been concerned with examining what factors contribute to, and so can be used to predict, sexual satisfaction. It is now widely accepted that sexual satisfaction is significantly associated with relationship satisfaction (Byers, Demmons, & Lawrance, 1998; Cupach & Metts, 1991; Farley & Davis, 1980; Gebhard, 1966; Hurlbert, Apt, & Rabehl, 1993; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Przybyla & Byrne, 1981; M. Young et al., 1998). The more satisfied an individual is with their relationship overall, the more likely they are to be satisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationship. It is unsurprising then that researchers have been keen to identify the specific relationship factors that contribute to sexual satisfaction. Relationship characteristics such as love, intimacy levels, emotional closeness, and amount of physical affection have been shown to be related to sexual satisfaction (Broderick, 1992; Darling, Davidson, & Cox, 1991; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Oggins, Leber, & Veroff, 1993; Sprecher, 2002). Research has also shown that communication is a significant contributor to sexual satisfaction (Chesney, Blakeney, Cole, & Chan, 1981; Ferroni & Taffee, 1997), particularly the

Physical aspects of the sexual relationship have also been demonstrated to be important components of sexual satisfaction (Darling et al., 1991; Waterman & Chiauzzi, 1982). Increased sexual activity (Bentler & Peeler, 1979; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Zhou, 1993) and a higher incidence of orgasms (Perlman & Abramson, 1982; M. Young et al., 1998) have been shown to be significant factors in the assessment of sexual satisfaction. Young et al. (1998) found that 90% of men and women who had sex 3 times per week expressed satisfaction, compared to 30% of men and women who had sex once per month. Although as the authors point out, the direction of this relationship is unclear. People may have sex less often because it is not satisfying, rather than being less satisfied because they have sex less often.

Unlike the sexual dysfunction research reviewed in the previous section, where men were the focus of studies, sexual satisfaction research has tended to explore gender differences. Studies of sexual satisfaction that have addressed gender tend to report findings that reflect dominant notions of masculinity and male sexuality. Men have been repeatedly shown to place a higher emphasis on sexual activities within relationships, compared to women (McCabe, 1999; Palton & Waring, 1985; L. Rubin, 1983). Various studies have found that relationship satisfaction is less important for men’s sexual satisfaction than for women’s (Darling et al., 1991; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Rosenzweig & Dailey, 1989). Indeed, Sprecher (2002) found that the most significant predictor of relationship break-up in premarital relationships among a sample of young people, was sexual dissatisfaction for men, and relationship dissatisfaction for women. She attributes this to men using the quality of the sexual relationship “as a barometer for the quality of the entire relationship” (p. 194).

Much sexual satisfaction research does not explicitly theorise gender or sexuality, or it relies on the concept of gender roles to explain differences between men and women (for example Jobes, 1986; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Poulin, 1992; Rosenzweig & Dailey, 1989). Characteristics and expectations associated with the
male gender role are evoked to explain research findings; for example, that men are expected to be assertive and driven, and women to be naïve and passive (Byers, 1996). Gender roles are seen to describe a coherent set of culturally proscribed behaviours and values that men have taken on wholesale and unproblematically. This is despite critical work conducted by those working within sociology, and particularly men’s studies, which has problematised the notion of a singular and unchanging masculinity that is often assumed by the use of ‘gender role’ (see for example Brittan, 1989; Brod, 1987; Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987; Hearn, 1987; Kaufman, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Tolson, 1977).

**Social exchange models of sexual satisfaction**

Much recent sexual satisfaction research employs a social exchange model to theorise sexual satisfaction. The advantage of this approach is that it provides a comprehensive framework for the examination of a range of factors that have been shown to contribute to sexual satisfaction. Within the social exchange approach a relationship is seen as an exchange of material or symbolic resources (Sprecher, 1998). The adoption of social exchange models is an attempt to introduce the interpersonal context within which people assess their sexual satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995) and unlike some other research, does not limit sexual satisfaction to physical aspects nor assume that more sexual activity is necessarily more satisfying.

The Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS) (Lawrance & Byers, 1992, 1995), assumes that sexual satisfaction depends on an individual’s assessment of the costs and rewards of their sexual relationship, as well as their perception of their partner’s costs and rewards. A sexual relationship, therefore, consists of a series of exchanges, where both partners seek to minimise costs and maximise rewards. A fundamental aspect of this model is that individuals who receive rewards will feel some obligation to reciprocate (Sprecher, 2002). It is not simply a question of rewards exceeding costs; for the individual the value of these rewards and their perception of the equity of the relationship are equally important.

When validating their model, Lawrance and Byers (1995) found that gender was not a significant variable in predicting sexual satisfaction. The perception of levels of
rewards, costs, relative rewards, relative costs and equality did not differ between men and women. Other authors have reported similar results (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, & Larson, 1982; Michaels, Edwards, & Acock, 1984; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). That is, there are no differences between men and women’s sexual satisfaction levels. However, there were differences in terms of the rankings men and women gave to specific sexual costs and rewards. In the original study, the most common sexual cost cited by men was ‘having sex when partner was not in the mood’, for women it was ‘having sex when you are not in the mood’ (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). In the IEMSS it is the ranking of sexual costs that is relevant, and not their content or meaning. For the current research study however, it seems important to explore both the experience of this sexual cost for men, and the cultural constructions surrounding it; the male sexuality that this cost implies is one that is driven and while uncomfortable, not halted by a partner’s lack of desire.

A critique that can be levelled at the IEMSS and social exchange models like it, is whilst the interpersonal context of sexual relationships is highlighted, the broader sociocultural context is not; for example there is little theorising around power and gender relations. Within social exchange models, sex is simply a relationship resource. The implications of this are that an individual may offer something sexual to their partner and then be ‘rewarded’ with a nonsexual resource, for example services, presents, love or gratitude, or visa versa. In her review of social exchange theories in sexuality research, Sprecher suggests that “gifts or special favours may be presented by the person who wants sex more, either before sex occurs (to create a sense of obligation) or after sex begins (as a form of reciprocation)” (2002, p. 36). Thus, like any economy, individuals can strategically deploy rewards and rewards to secure their desired reward. Further, according to Sprecher “some men and possibly a few women” may expect a return on their investment, and can experience “inequity distress” if it is not forthcoming. The term inequity distress seems innocuous, but this concept has been used to explain forced sex in established relationships (Shotland & Goodstein, 1992) and extramarital affairs (Sprecher, 2002). There is no explanation as to why there may be a difference between men and women’s propensity to manipulate the sexual economy. In short, the social exchange models assume men and women are equally empowered to negotiate exchanges, that strategic manipulation of the system is open to everyone, and sexual costs (or indeed
rewards) have the same meaning for men and women. A number of authors have discussed the specific value of sexual activity for men, in particular reinforcing a man’s sense of his own masculinity and status among his peers (Llewellyn-Jones, 1981; Zilbergeld, 1999). Further, some authors have noted that for some men, sex is where their intimacy needs are met (Metcalf, 1985; Seidler, 1985). Thus, the meaning of sex, within different contexts, is an important aspect of men’s evaluation of sexual satisfaction.

Critical evaluation of the research

The shift away from the simplistic and reductionist quantification of sexual satisfaction, for example as frequency of sexual activity or orgasmic consistency, signals a move away from individualistic physical understandings of sexual satisfaction. Much of the recent sexual satisfaction research, particularly that utilising social exchange theories, goes some way to acknowledge that sexual satisfaction is a complex of subjective evaluations - involving physical, psychological and emotional dimensions - that takes places within a relational context. However, many of these gains are lost by the reduction of these complexities to a balanced or unbalanced equation of costs and rewards. Ultimately, the findings reviewed above demonstrated how satisfied men are, often in comparison to women, but little about men’s subjective experience of sexual satisfaction. Further, the emphasis on the relationship as the context of men’s sexual satisfaction can discount the broader sociocultural context in which men give meaning to their sexuality and sexual experiences. It also ignores the significance of sex for men beyond the relationship context, for example as a mark of adulthood or status (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1994; Wight, 1996). Consequently, there is no possibility of examining the importance of the sociocultural dimension in men’s sexual satisfaction. Moreover, the effect of broader social changes on men’s sexual satisfaction cannot be examined; for example, the increasing importance of women’s sexual pleasure and the concomitant expectations that men facilitate this.

There are a number of additional issues to consider when assessing the utility of this research for understanding men’s experiences of sex and sexuality in relation to cultural representations. On a methodological and epistemological level, the sexual
satisfaction literature relies entirely on quantitative methods. Thus, what we can know about men’s evaluations and experience of sexual satisfaction is limited to parameters predetermined by the researchers. The inherently static nature of exchange models does not allow for cultural or historical localisation; indeed, they strive for a universal theory. A related issue is the general lack of theorising around sexual satisfaction as a gendered experience. This means examining gender beyond its ability to explain differences between men and women, and exploring the experience of sexual satisfaction ‘as a man’. Moreover, in all the literature reviewed ‘male’ and ‘female’ were employed as unproblematic concepts that describe unified identity categories and reflect real differences between all men and all women. Further, the universalising effect of this means that all men are assumed to share the characteristics associated with the category male; the limited cross-cultural research on sexual satisfaction calls this into question (for example Renaud et al., 1997). In addition, writers in the burgeoning field of men’s studies reinforce this doubt, in particular those exploring masculinities and the differing experiences of masculinity and sexuality (Whitehead, 2002).

Examining sociocultural dimensions of sexual satisfaction are likely to add to the existing research, allowing an exploration of the role of broader cultural contexts in shaping - or producing - men’s expectations, perceptions of sexual costs and rewards, and overall sexual satisfaction.

**Unwanted sexual activity**

One of the cultural ‘truths’ about male sexuality is that men never turn down an opportunity for sex (Clark & Hatfield, 1989; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999). This raises an important question of how men deal with situations where they do not want sex, be this coerced sexual activity, or consensual but undesired sexual activity. Whilst there is a small but rich body of research on men and coerced sex, there is very little on men and consensual but undesired sexual activity.
Coerced sexual activity

A recent Australian study, with a representative sample of 10173 men aged 16 to 59, found that 4.5% of heterosexual men had been ‘forced or frightened’ into unwanted sexual activity; just over half experienced this at age 16 or younger (de Visser, Smith, Rissel, & Grulich, 2003). Unfortunately, respondents were not asked about the gender of the person who coerced them. In a smaller American household survey with 1480 men, 7.2% reported experiencing forced sexual contact as adults, with the majority reporting it was a woman who coerced them (Sorenson, Stein, Siegel, Golding, & Burnam, 1987). A range of American studies suggest that the incidence of coerced sexual activity, where a woman is responsible for the coercion, is much higher in college-aged men: between 12 and 48% (Lottes, 1991; Murphy, 1984; O'Sullivan, Byers, & Finkelman, 1998; Poppen & Segal, 1988; Sandberg, Jackson, & Petretic-Jackson, 1987; Sorenson et al., 1987; C. Struckman-Johnson, 1988; C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994a; C. Struckman-Johnson, D. Struckman-Johnson, & P. Anderson, 2003). These variations are likely due to methodological differences such as limiting the definition of sexual activity to intercourse or including kissing and touching; focusing only on dating couples or including virgins; and the use of different terms - forced, pressured, coerced - to describe sexual coercion.

Research examining the consequences of sexual coercion suggests that men can experience depression, suicidal behaviour, anger, sexual difficulties, fear of intimacy, and an increased likelihood of STI diagnosis (de Visser et al., 2003). In the Australian study cited above, comparisons between men who have experienced sexual coercion and men who have not, found the former reported significantly higher psychosocial distress, and in the past year were more likely to have experienced a lack of interest in sex, found sex to be not as pleasurable and experienced anxiety about their sexual performance (de Visser et al., 2003). Other research has characterised men’s responses as conflicted; for example, feeling sad and uncomfortable yet cared for and confident of their manhood (Long & Muehlenhard, 1987).
It is widely reported that men report less negative consequences of coercive sex when compared to women (Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, & Turner, 1999; Siegel, Golding, Burnam, & Sorenson, 1990; C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991, 1993, 1994b, 1997; D. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1995). In a study with 268 American college men, in which 16% had experienced at least one episode of coerced sex, half reported neutral responses (C. Struckman-Johnson, 1988). A later study reported that while 23% experienced moderate to severe effects, the majority of men experienced minimal negative effects (C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994a). It is unclear how useful, or indeed appropriate, these kinds of gender comparisons are. For one, they assume that sexual coercion is fundamentally the same for men and women, and thus, that men’s more neutral responses are of interest. In a discursive examination of rape, Nicola Gavey has argued that “the ways in which the bodies involved in rape are sexed (as man or as woman) fundamentally determines the experience and the ‘reality’ of the event, to the extent that it is not clear whether it can really still be rape in the way that we usually understand what rape means, when the aggressor is a woman” (2005, p. 203). Indeed, differences in power and physical strength, and thus potential for danger or harm, means that “the situation is intrinsically and intensely different for women and men” (p. 203). The specific strategies men report having been subjected to reinforces this. The literature in this area confirms that when women coerce sexual activity, they overwhelmingly use psychological or verbal pressure, rather than physical force (for a review of this research see C Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003); in one study, 88% of men reporting coerced sexual activity had experienced this strategy (C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994a). Other strategies that men report experiencing included: women using alcohol or drugs to incapacitate them, attempting to initiate sex with an already incapacitated man, attempting to arouse an unwilling partner, and touching and flirting (Anderson & Aymami, 1993; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1998; C Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003).

In interviews and written descriptions from men who experienced coerced sexual activity, fears were often expressed about the impact on sexual reputation if it was widely known that a man had refused sex (C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994a). A number of the interviewees wondered if there was something wrong with them because they did not want to have sex, especially when it was an
‘easy lay’ or with a beautiful woman. The expectation that men are always ready and wanting sex seems especially salient here (Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999). Further, the finding that women attempting to coerce sexual activity often evoked fears - such as threatening to tell peers that the man could not attain an erection, or accusing him of not finding her attractive (C. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994a) - is surely also relevant. Cultural notions of gender and sexuality then, are implicated in men’s experience of, and responses to, coerced sexual activity. Arguably many of the fears expressed by men are applicable to any situations where sex is initiated but men do not desire it, indeed in the absence of coercion - physical or psychological, pressure or force - it seems likely they would be more significant.

**Consensual but unwanted sexual activity**

O’Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) suggest that issues of consent in sexual situations are fraught with difficulties; establishing a lack of consent is a particular problem (see also Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Impett & Peplau, 2003; Muehlenhard, Powch, Phelps, & Giusti, 1992). This is amplified in situations where it is psychological, for example threats to reputation, rather than physical pressure exerted; psychological pressure was the most common threat reported by men in the studies reviewed above. O’Sullivan and Allgeier suggest that many researchers bypass the problem of consent by focusing on unwanted sexual activity, such that the overt demonstration of nonconsent is not relevant. They suggest this is problematic as unwanted sexual activity is not inevitably coerced, and recommend exploring consensual but undesired sexual activity as a sexual phenomenon distinct from sexual situations where men are coerced, verbally or physically, into sexual activity.

According to O’Sullivan and Allgeier “consensual participation in unwanted sexual activity refers to situations in which a person freely consents to sexual activity with a partner without experiencing a concomitant desire for the sexual activity” (1998, p. 235). A small number of studies have explicitly looked at this. One study, conducted across five American universities, found that 35% of men had at some point consented to unwanted sexual intercourse (Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, & Levitskaya, 1994). Another study, again with American college students in dating relationships, found 40% of men had participated in sexual intercourse that they did
not want (Impett & Peplau, 2002, as cited by Impett & Peplau, 2003). A third study explored sexual activity beyond intercourse, again with American college students in committed relationships (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). The researchers reported that 26% of men had engaged in consensual but unwanted sexual activity in the preceding two-week period. Methodological differences across these studies make comparison of findings difficult; for example, restricting the sample to sexually active people in relationships, including all sexual activities or just intercourse. No research has been conducted with non-college samples, or with Australian men.

Charlene Muehlenhard’s (Muehlenhard, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988) research on unwanted sexual activity (consensual and coerced) draws particular attention to the different expectations of men and women set out by traditional sexual scripts (see also Check & Malamuth, 1983; J. Laws & Schwartz, 1977; Zilbergeld, 1978). In a study with American college students (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988), she found that 72% of men reported taking part in unwanted sexual activity for altruistic reasons - to satisfy a partner or because they did not want their partner to feel rejected. Further, men were more likely than women to cite gender role concerns and a desire to gain sexual experience; this resonates with the concerns expressed by men in the research on coerced sexual activity reported above. Many of these motivations are understandable within the sexual script that dictates men pursue sexual activity (Muehlenhard, 1988). In a similar study by Poppen and Segal (1988), 79% of men reported reasons other than coercion for participating in unwanted sexual activity, such as peer pressure, feelings of inadequacy, pressure to be desirable. These studies suggest that participating in undesired sexual activity is a relatively common experience, in which there are complex motivations, and that cultural expectations are as important here as they appear to be in the research on sexual coercion discussed earlier.

In the only study to focus solely on consensual but unwanted sexual activity (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998), men’s investment in their relationship was a significant motivation in participation in unwanted sexual activity. Many men cited concern for partner’s feelings or wanting to satisfy partner’s needs; they also cited more negative reasons like obligation. The most common motivation was avoidance of relationship tension. The standard narrative of a heterosexual relationship involves
an increasing level of intimacy (Roche, 1986; Walsh, 1991), which must be maintained to sustain a healthy relationship; the importance of sex for signalling a shift in relationship status, or as a demonstration of commitment (Gavey et al., 1999; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998), may also be significant. These findings suggest that men’s participation in undesired sexual activity is more complicated than the simple performance of gender role expectations or the traditional sexual script. O'Sullivan and Allgeier’s study also examined the consequences of participating in consensual but unwanted sexual activity. Over half of male participants reported no negative outcomes to undesired sex, echoing the findings discussed above on coerced sex. The negative consequences that were reported applied to both the individual and the relationship, such as emotional discomfort and resentment. All of the men in this study reported at least one positive outcome, such as promoting intimacy and other relationship enhancing consequences. There is no research on the long-term consequences of limited or ongoing participation in unwanted sexual activity.

The limited research on men’s participation in undesired but consensual sexual activity, suggests that the meanings of sex with a heterosexual relationship, as well as the broader sociocultural milieu, must be included in an examination of participation in undesired sex. Understanding why men participate, consensually, in sexual activity that they do not desire, appears to be more complex than simply the effect of the dominant cultural expectation that men seek opportunities for sex.

**Critical evaluation of the research**

There are a number of issues that can be raised about the literature discussed above. Firstly, the differences between physically coerced, psychologically coerced and consensual but unwanted sexual activity are very ambiguous and not always made distinct in the studies. Further, most of the coerced sexual activity discussed here was in the context of non-physical coercion; given this, the line adopted between coerced and consensual seems not only arbitrary, but unhelpful. For example, in understanding men’s experiences of unwanted sexual activity, is there a meaningful difference between a man’s fear that a sexual partner will tell his peers he was not interested in sex (framed as non-coercive) and a sexual partner threatening to tell peers if he does not comply (framed as coercive)?
A second issue relates to the samples used. The reliance on young people and college students makes the application of this literature somewhat limited. The importance of particular motivations may change across the lifespan; for example, concerns about sexuality, meeting gender role expectations, and peer perceptions may be more relevant to younger than older men (Impett & Peplau, 2003). This younger population is not only likely to be in relationships of a relatively short duration but to have significantly less relationship experience. This is important as it is within ongoing and longer term relationship that there is often a discrepancy between partners’ desire levels (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). The existence of a sexual contract, the implicit understanding that one partner may participate in sexual activity even when they do not desire it to satisfy the other partner’s needs, has often been proposed to operate within long-term relationships (Shotland & Goodstein, 1992). We know little about how men may experience and negotiate an unwanted sexual initiation, be it coercive or not, from a long-term partner.

Thirdly, although central to both sets of literature, there was surprisingly little examination of desire, and the meaning of male sexual desire. What is the role of desire, and how do men understand their lack of desire? What does it mean to not want to participate in sexual activity? Further, if men are taking part in undesired intercourse they are presumably able to attain an erection, what does desire mean to these men? It is implicit in much of the literature that an individual simply desires or does not desire sex. In recent work with young women, Charlene Muehlenhard (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005) has found multiple dimensions along which an individual may want and not want to engage in sexual activity. As the findings reported above suggest, men may not want to engage in sexual activity but they may want the increased intimacy and closeness that this may bring, the sense of having sexually satisfied their partner, or confirmation of their sexuality/gender.

To some extent the literature on both coerced and non-coerced sexual activity have examined how sociocultural expectations of male sexuality may be implicated in men’s subjective experience. However, this has been largely limited to the significant cultural pressure on men to seek opportunities for sex. The meaning of sex, that is, the symbolic meaning of sexual activity for men’s sexuality and within heterosexual
relationships is rarely examined. The expectations placed on men by dominant notions of masculinity are clearly relevant for understanding their participation in any unwanted sexual activity - consensual or coerced, and for any analysis of the consequences of that participation.

*Communication and sociosexual skills*

Scholars in this area argue that good communication is significant for developing and maintaining good relationships (Chesney et al., 1981; Ferroni & Taffee, 1997). It is important to acknowledge the causal relationship evoked here - good communication leads to a good relationship. While others argue that increased sexual communication is merely a feature of relationships where romantic involvement, love and commitment are high (Herold & Way, 1988; Z. Rubin, Hill, Peplau, & Dunkel-Schetter, 1980), suggestions of a causal relationship is a common feature of theorising in this area. For example, Cupach and Metts (1991) suggest that communication skills and the ability to communicate about sex facilitates relationship closeness and intimacy; this is in part because sexual satisfaction is associated with relationship satisfaction. In short, these researchers argue that the ability to communicate about sex, and communicating more, allows partners to negotiate a mutually satisfying sexual script (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Cupach & Metts, 1991):

Talking about sex with one’s partner reveals one’s sexual desires, preferences, fears and standards. Disclosure of such information promotes sexual satisfaction (Metts & Cupach, 1989, p. 150)

Sexual communication research has tended to focus on verbal communication; specifically, the amount or frequency of self-disclosure between sexual partners (see for example Yelsma, 1986), and the degree of satisfaction with communication by looking at the level of agreement between partners across sexual topics (see for example Purnine & Carey, 1997; Ross, Clifford, & Eisenman, 1987). Sexual disclosure has been shown to be a significant issue in both sexual and relationship satisfaction (LoPiccolo & LoPiccolo, 1978; Metts & Cupach, 1989; Russell, 1990),
being associated with greater sexual satisfaction in long-term relationships (MacNeil & Byers, 1997; Purnine & Carey, 1997), and less sexual problems (Byers & Demmons, 1999).

Research examining gender differences in sexual communication has found that whilst women are more disclosing in relationships than men, this is limited to nonsexual topics (Hendrick, 1981; Vera & Betz, 1992). It has been suggested that women disclose more about relational and emotional, rather than sexual topics, which is in line with dominant constructions of femininity, where ‘good’ women are expected to be sexually naïve (Byers & Demmons, 1999). Equally, dominant notions of masculinity would suggest that men disclose more about sexual topics in relationships than women do, as they are expected to be sexually knowledgeable and seek sexual experiences. This is not borne out by research: men have been shown to disclose no more about their sexual likes and dislikes than women (Byers & Demmons, 1999). This finding reveals a limitation of the focus on disclosure. Byers and Demmons (1999) suggest that men orchestrate satisfying sexual encounters without self-disclosing. However, other research has shown that men are more instrumental than affective in their communication in sexual situations (Byers, 1996; Lawrance, Taylor, & Byers, 1996), and it would be reasonable to categorise the disclosing of likes and dislikes as instrumental communication.

The findings on gendered communication are perhaps limited by the underlying assumption that men and women are communicating from the same position in a relationship. Within both hegemonic masculinity and the traditional heterosexual script, men are expected to be sexually assertive, in control, and initiating; women on the other hand are expected to be sexually naïve, the passive recipient of men’s advances (Muehlenhard, 1988). Research suggests that women often initiate sexual encounters by using subtle and often non-verbal cues, such as eye contract, to instigate an overt response from a man (Moore, 1995; Perper, 1989). This is a type of sexual communication that allows both man and woman to meet the gendered expectations of the traditional sexual script (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Therefore, men may not need to disclose in order to facilitate their sexual satisfaction, as they are more likely to be overtly determining the sexual activities.
In addition, the heterosexual sexual script is such that no verbal communication may occur at all. In interviews with heterosexual men, Seal and Ehrhardt found that some men pursued sexual activity “via non-verbal body contact” (2003, p. 304), it was only when the woman was not interested in continuing that verbal communication would sometimes occur. Moreover, due to the central position of intercourse in heterosexual sexual encounters (Bogart et al., 2000; Gavey et al., 1999) verbal disclosure of desires may not be necessary unless a different activity is desired. And even then it may not be verbal (Byers & Demmons, 1999); a qualitative study with young Australian students found that many women had experienced men pushing their heads down toward their penis, indicating a desire for oral sex (Roberts, 1992). Therefore, limiting the study of sexual communication to verbal communication, and discounting nonverbal communication, such as physical cues, may be restrictive for research on men’s experience of their sexuality.

A related issue is the focus on the quantity rather than the content of communication. This reflects a general emphasis on frequency rather than meaning in the mainstream psychological literature. Moreover, the literature reviewed above assumes that a person knows their sexual likes and dislikes; and that this knowledge comes from within and exists separate to the relationship, rather than being a product of the sexual relationship and the broader sociocultural context. Further, that the sharing of this knowledge will induce a partner to act on these likes and dislikes, and having done so, each will be sexually satisfied. It also takes no account of what cultural constraints there may be on disclosing sexual likes and dislikes. Within this conceptualisation there is a danger that good communication becomes operationalised as whether you have told your partner how you like to be kissed, touched, or how you would like a bit of sexual variety.

Sociosexual skills: An alternative approach

An alternative approach to that described above, is the study of sociosexual skills, that is, the communication and behavioural skills needed to successfully negotiate a range of sexual situations; this concept is variously referred to as ‘sexual interaction skills’, ‘homosocial competence’, ‘sociosexual competence’ and ‘interactional competence’. Research on sociosexual skills has been conducted in relation to
condom use and contraception (Burger & Inderbitzen, 1985; Milan & Kilmann, 1987), and HIV/AIDS and safer sex (Amaro, 1995; Galligan & Terry, 1993; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, & Thomson, 1990; Kane, 1990; Kippax, Crawford, Waldby, & Benton, 1990; Mays & Cochran, 1988; Nangle & Hansen, 1993). Apart from some research with incarcerated sex offenders (see for example W. Marshall & Barbaree, 1984; W. Marshall, Hudson, & Hodkinson, 1993), the majority of this research has been conducted with heterosexual women.

There is some disagreement about what the concept of sociosexual skill encompasses. In a meta-analysis of research on heterosocial competency in sex offenders, Dresnick suggests that the following definition is common to all the studies he reviewed: “a person's ability to interact with a person of the opposite sex in an actual, hypothetical, or potentially romantic situation, or the ability to correctly interpret a woman's affective cues in a romantic situation” (2003, p. 170). An obvious shortcoming of this definition is the concentration on men’s awareness and interpretation of women’s behaviours and cues, and not on their own feelings, desires and behaviour.

A more encompassing definition of sociosexual skill is a “complex of communicative and social skills, capacities, sensitivities, and mental and behavioural strategies that help people arrange their heterosexual encounters in a mutually rewarding way” (Vanwesenbeeck, Bekker, & van Lenning, 1998, p. 317). This definition allows us to consider how men understand, communicate and respond to their own desires, needs and fears, as well as their sexual partner’s. This conception is also situation and person specific; what constitutes competent behaviour will depend on the desired outcomes. As noted by Vanwesenbeeck et al., the kinds of behaviour appropriate to a one night stand are quite different to the strategies appropriate to negotiating a sexual relationship in the context of a long-term relationship. Being able to communicate desires to a partner in such a way as they will heed and modify their behaviour, listening to a partner’s desires, and being able to negotiate not just what sexual interaction, but when - dealing with disparate sexual desire, for example - are significant sociosexual skills.
A focus on sociosexual skills allows for recognition of the social and cultural contexts in which sexual encounters are negotiated; it also acknowledges that men and women are positioned differently within these contexts. However, as alluded to earlier, there is very little sociosexual skills research with men beyond that on incarcerated sex offenders. One quantitative study on a ‘normal’ sample, used the findings from a qualitative study to develop sociosexual scales to explore the gendered patterns of behaviour in sexual situations (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998). This study is interesting because it explicitly positions the behaviours and emotions in sexual encounters as mediated by sociocultural notions of gender and heterosexuality.

Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) developed three scales to describe interaction patterns in heterosexual sexual encounters. These scales do not measure the degree to which an ideal is met, nor are they seen as measuring the amount of skill an individual possesses; rather the scales describe the patterns of behaviour and emotions an individual demonstrates in sexual interactions. The first scale, ‘defensive control’, describes limit setting behaviour like discussing contraception, and indicating or stopping activities that are disliked. The second scale, ‘proactive control’, relates to seductive behaviour such as using flattery or charm to produce activities that are desired; many of these behaviours are traditionally associated with masculinity. The third scale, ‘anxious insecurity’, describes feelings and emotions that are experienced during sexual encounters, which Vanwesenbeeck et al. describe as relating to a lack of control and determination. Many of the items, however, appear to describe a general lack of sexual confidence; the scale includes items on feelings of uncertainty about what you or your partner desires, apprehensiveness about communicating, and lack of confidence in your own body or sexual performance. In a study with 386 Dutch university students, Vanwesenbeeck et al. found differences between men and women’s sexual interaction patterns. Men reported less ‘defensive control’ and more ‘proactive control’ than women did; they were also less likely to experience ‘anxious insecurity’ than women were. Men in stable relationships experienced less ‘anxious security’ than single or casually dating men reported. In short, the pattern of behavioural strategies was in line with traditional gender roles and the associated sexual scripts.
The findings from the Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) study also suggested that men employ seductive strategies in their sexual encounters, and tend to do so regardless of their feelings of sexual confidence. Even when men’s ‘anxious insecurity’ was high - sexual confidence was low - they still behaved proactively. This means that even when they are feeling unsure of the sexual cues from their partner or themselves, or experiencing a lack of confidence about what to do, their behaviour accords with dominant notions of masculinity. The sociocultural expectation that men are sexually knowledgeable and responsible for sex is clearly implicated here. This study suffers from the usual problems inherent in using a student sample: a limited range in age (average 21.7 years), education level and relationship duration. This raises questions about the extent to which patterns of behaviour and emotion are a product of negotiation between partners, or how this might differ in casual and long-term relationships. Moreover, this study focused on differences across gender; it is not clear what differences there are across men and what might account for them.

Related research on men and sexual interaction skills, has shown that men who exhibit social incompetence or insensitivity are also more likely to endorse traditional sex role stereotypes and rape myths (Burt, 1980; Mosher & Anderson, 1986; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984; Reilly, Lott, Caldwell, & DeLuca, 1992). Men who endorse traditional gender roles have also been shown to be more likely to have engaged in sexually coercive verbal and physical behaviour (Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1990). In the Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) study, stronger endorsement of adversarial beliefs (more conservative gender beliefs and greater acceptance of interpersonal violence) was associated with more ‘proactive control’. In other words, men who endorse characteristics associated with dominant masculinity, unsurprisingly, behave in line with these ideals. These findings suggest that there is a significant relationship between discursive representations of male sexuality and men’s sociosexual behaviour.

Critical evaluation of the research

Sexual communication research has tended to focus on verbal communication and in particular on the disclosure of sexual likes and dislikes. This research demonstrates that sexual communication is important, having a positive effect on relationship and
sexual satisfaction. However, in not exploring the relevance of the sociocultural
dimension, this literature discounts the positioning of men as responsible for
initiating and determining sexual activities. As such, the content and form of men’s
sexual communication is likely to be quite different to women, who are more likely
to be positioned as passive recipients of men’s sexual advances.

The sociocultural context in which sex takes place, and in which men give meaning
to their sexuality, is important for understanding sexual communication. The
sociosexual skills research assumes that behaviours and emotions expressed in sexual
encounters are constituted within the culture and historical period the individual is
living; it is implicit then that the meanings of sex are a product of culture. However,
the lack of general population research, with the exception of the single Dutch study
with young people, means there is a need for further research.

2.3. Summary

The aim of the review of literature in this chapter was two fold. Firstly, to provide a
general picture of research conducted within mainstream, positivist psychology on
sex and sexuality. This constitutes the context in which the current research study on
male sexuality, especially the quantitative aspect, is partially situated. The second
aim was to evaluate the models and methodologies employed, and the research
findings reported, in terms of the utility of previous research findings for
understanding men’s experiences of sex and sexuality in relation to cultural
representations.

The literature on pornography and media effects focused on effect, rather than on
content. The chief concern in this literature was on whether sexual imagery produced
changes in sexual behaviour and attitudes, be that an earlier age of first intercourse,
or aggression toward women. In the pornography literature, very little of the research
was concerned with men’s sexuality beyond behaviour or attitudes toward women.
The relevance of this largely laboratory based research in attempting to understand
heterosexual men’s sexuality, or the role of culture and representations in men’s
subjective experience of their sexuality, is debatable. The research on sexual
representations and young people demonstrated that young people look to popular
culture for knowledge about sex and sexuality, and that representations of sex and
sexuality are pervasive in popular culture. Less attention was given to the content of
these representations beyond information such as the type of activity depicted and
who initiated. This literature tells us nothing about the negotiation of sexuality and
relationships or about subjectivity, or about how young people navigate the plethora
of contradictory representations they are exposed to. These two bodies of literature
treated representations in isolation from the broader sociocultural context in which
individuals understand their sexuality, gave little weight to the multiple meanings of
the representations men are exposed to, and disregarded men’s subjective
experiences.

In psychological research on sexuality, the sociocultural dimension of male sexuality
was variously ignored, positioned as a detrimental influence on natural sexuality, or
seen as vital in understanding the expression of sexuality. In the sexual dysfunction
research, it was framed as a source of myths and inaccurate information, potentially
impeding the expression of normal male sexuality by creating unrealistic
expectations. The role of culture in establishing normal male sexuality was ignored.
In the sexual communication research, the sociocultural was largely absent, with
little attention paid to how this produces differing expectations of men and women,
or determines what are transgressive practices and hence what can be disclosed. This
stands in contrast with the sociosexual skills research that positions culture as a
context wherein behaviours and emotions associated with sex become meaningful.
The unwanted sexual activity research saw the sociocultural as heavily implicated in
men’s understandings of, and responses to, unwanted sexual activity (coerced and
non-coerced).

Throughout this chapter, a criticism has been raised about a general lack of attention
to the meaning and significance of sex. This reflects an emphasis in psychological
research on objective measurement to determine the incidence of a phenomena, or its
predictive factors, rather than on subjective experience. It has been suggested
throughout this review that the significance of sex for men is a crucial issue for
understanding male sexuality, and men’s subjective experience. The meaning of
specific practices, the meaning of sex for a relationship, the value of sex for the
performance of masculinity, the possibility that sex is the only opportunity for intimacy, are all issues that are important for understanding erectile dysfunction, sexual satisfaction, participation in unwanted sex and communication, yet they are often overlooked. Related to this is the role of the sociocultural both as the context where phenomena becomes meaningful and as a source of normative expectations.

On a methodological level there are three common limitations with the literature reviewed here. Firstly, a significant proportion of these studies relied on student samples. Apart from issues around age, class and education level, these are men who have limited relationship experience, and are in relatively short term relationships. The vast majority of this research was conducted with American or Canadian samples; it is not clear how significant social and cultural differences between this region and Australia may be. A second issue relates to the overwhelming use of quantitative methods. These methods are useful for exploring incidence levels and broad themes; they are less productive for understanding men’s subjective experience of an issue or how these issues may be negotiated with a partner. Further, quantitative methods can tell us little about how men respond to and negotiate potentially contradictory cultural expectations. A final related issue is that the aim in much of the literature reviewed above was to identify factors that would allow the prediction of an outcome, such as sexual satisfaction. The drawback of this is that only statistically significant effects are of interest, rather then issues that men subjectivity perceive to be important or relevant.

Social constructionist research on sexuality is reviewed in the next chapter. This work explicitly addresses the sociocultural context in which men understand their sexuality and sexual experiences. The focus in constructionist research is not behavioural outcomes or attitudes and beliefs, but meaning, negotiation and subjective experience.
CHAPTER 3. A Review of Social Constructionist Literature on Sexuality

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries to gradually uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct. (Foucault, 1979b, p. 105)

Writers on the social and historical construction of sex and sexuality come from a broad range of disciplines, and though clearly the most well known, Michel Foucault (1979b) was not the first to problematise the notion that sexuality is a natural given (Bland & Mort, 1997; S. Jackson, 1996). Work on sexual scripts (Gagnon, 1977; Gagnon & Simon, 1973) and research by sociologists such as McIntosh (1968) and Plummer (1975) also examined the social construction of sex and sexuality. Questioning the framing of sex and sexuality as a natural given was also central to much feminist writings (S. Jackson, 1996). However, Foucault’s writings on sexuality have been incredibly influential, both for the arguments he presented and for the methodologies he developed (Weedon, 1987, 1997). In The History of Sexuality (Volume 1, 1979b), Foucault explores the ways in which sexuality has come to be spoken about and seen in ways we recognise by documenting the development of knowledges that constitute sexuality. This genealogy of sexuality questions, amongst other ideas, the repressive hypothesis applied to the nineteenth century where it is assumed there was a pervasive silence around sex and sexuality (Burr, 1995). Foucault argues that sexuality is a primary locus of power in contemporary society (Weedon, 1987, 1997), and examines the regulation of

Foucault and Weeks are concerned with tracing the trajectory of shifting meanings that have produced current meanings of sex and sexuality, and hence with the social and political conditions that produce certain kinds of sexual subjects. Most of the research reviewed in this chapter is not genealogical - examining the history of discourses - but explores the discourses around sexuality circulating at a specific moment, and the subject positions made available by them. This literature calls in to question the assumption that sexuality is a powerful natural instinct or energy, driven by a “‘biological mandate’ which presses against and must be restrained by the cultural matrix” (Weeks, 1986, p. 24). Moreover, it focuses explicitly on meaning, and on social, cultural and historical contexts because “physically identical sexual acts may have varying social significance and meaning depending on how they are defined and understood in different cultures and historical periods” (Richters, 2001, p. 19). Thus, this literature seeks to describe and explain subjective experience, rather than to quantify and predict it, as was the case in much of the research reviewed in the previous chapter. The literature reviewed in this chapter also reflects a very different set of assumptions about the nature of sexuality and the role of culture; the review will begin with a summary of these assumptions.

3.1. A social constructionist approach to research on sexuality

Vivien Burr (1995) suggests that there are four key assumptions that social constructionist research shares. Firstly, a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge. This is an anti-empiricist, anti-positivist epistemological position that questions whether objective observation can reveal the truth about the world. Secondly, a historical and cultural specificity. Knowledge is, in part, a product of culture and history and should not be seen as separate to the contexts of its production. Thirdly, knowledge as sustained by social processes. Knowledge is a product of social process and the interactions of people. Finally, knowledge and social action go together. The knowledges that are constructed through social process
make possible some social practices and action, and deny others. Not all of the writers whose work is reviewed in this section would describe their work as social constructionist. However, all of the work reviewed in this chapter can be seen to share the assumptions outlined by Burr. Thus, the term social constructionist will be employed as an umbrella term.

Social constructionist writing covers a broad range of disciplines, however, this literature review generally concentrates on psychological work that is part of what is often called the ‘turn to language’, a shift that began in psychology in the 1970s and 1980s (Willig, 2001). This reflects a shift away from conceptualising language as a shared system of fixed signs that provide access to an individual’s internal states and unproblematically describes reality - that is, language as a window to the inner truths of the individual. Instead, a performative action-oriented approach is adopted, where language is productive, and heavily implicated in constructing reality. A social constructionist perspective is particularly relevant for the current research topic, as this approach concentrates on the “the role of representations on constructing human subjectivities” (Squire, 2000a, p. 10). Corrine Squire (2000a) suggests that there has been a recent ‘turn to culture’ within psychology, characterised by a shift away from language as the focus, to an emphasis on cultural practice (Griffin, 2000). This echoes Ian Parker’s call for a ‘turn to discursive practice’ whereby critical psychologists and discourse analysts “grasp the linguistic, meaningful, embodied nature of human nature” (2004, p. 156). Many of the writers featured in this literature review can be considered part of these burgeoning areas of critical psychology (Ibanez & Iniguez, 1997), which tends to emphasis post-structuralist theoretical approaches (Griffin, 2000), and new cultural psychology (Squire, 2000b).

A great deal of the research reviewed in this chapter is conducted within a post-structuralist framework, and typically draws on Foucault’s extensive writings on discursive practice and on power/knowledge, to examine the “interrelation between discourse, power and subjectification” (Griffin, 2000, p. 22). Moreover, a significant proportion of this research utilises feminist post-structuralism, which is itself

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5 Other influential theoretical perspectives in post-structuralism include Derrida’s work, post-Saussurean linguistics, Marxism, psychoanalysis (especially Lacan), feminism, and French feminism such as the work of Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray (Gavey, 1989).
influenced by Foucault’s work (for comprehensive summaries see Gavey, 1989; Weedon, 1987, 1997). For this reason, and because this is the framework adopted in the discursive examinations undertaken in Chapters 5 to 7, the assumptions underlying this approach will be discussed in the following section.

**A post-structuralist approach to sexuality**

A post-structuralist approach is concerned with the cultural and discursive resources people draw on to ascribe meaning to their experiences. It is assumed that it is through language and the symbolic sphere, that we give meaning to our experiences (Burr, 1995). For it is in the very act of ascribing meaning that experience is produced. How we think about or understand sexuality within the culture and time we live, the material and discursive practices we enact around our sexuality, and the meanings we give to our experiences, are all constructed by and through a complex network of discursive relations. What we know of ourselves is thus in terms of what “culture enables and allows us to ‘think’ epistemically, and through our positions in the social structure” (Buchbinder, 1998, p. 15).

In contrast to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 where the meaning of a representation was fixed - sex is sex is sex - and language was deemed to merely reflect or communicate this fixed meaning, the fluid nature of language and the plurality of meaning are central to a post-structuralist perspective. Meaning is constituted in language, and is not guaranteed by the subject who speaks or writes it; rather meaning is the product of socially and historically specific discursive relations (Weedon, 1987, 1997). It is this central principle that leads to the claim that the meaning of ‘sex’, or any other concept, is “never fixed, always open to question, always contestable, always temporary” (Burr, 1995, p. 39). A representation, or a man’s description of his experience, therefore has many potential meanings.

This point that meaning is contestable and temporary has significant implications for how we understand sexuality. When talking about ‘sex’ we may mean any number of sexual practices with any number of people, indeed it may not involve physical contact between bodies at all, as in phone or cyber sex. And finally, it may be
understood differently by those involved; for example where the legal system
determines whether sex or rape has taken place (Lees, 1997a). The conflict in the last
example is a struggle for one meaning to be determined as ‘truth’. Hence, meaning is
also the product of power relations. Of the possible meanings, each has different
consequences, and the struggle to assign truth status to one meaning is essentially a
struggle for power. The power to determine which meaning of ‘sex’ is assigned truth
status, also determines which social and material practices are allowed (Burr, 1995).

Language is made up of - structured by - discourses. This Foucauldian notion of
discourse envisions a regulated system of statements that constructs an object in a
particular way (Burr, 1995; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984,
1998; Parker, 1992; Willig, 2001). A discourse is knowledge about an object, for
example, ‘sexuality’, and it is the knowledge that brings the object into social reality.
There are many discourses around sex; each produces sex in a particular way.
According to Henriques et al. (1984, 1998), there are rules about the manner in
which these discourses interact and combine with each other, as well as how they
interact with discourses not specifically relating to sexuality.

The different competing meanings, or truths, about sex, are not all equally valid.
Some meanings are privileged; they present themselves as normal, natural and
universal (Buchbinder, 1998), the implications of which will be discussed later.
Particular forms of masculinity are also privileged. Hegemonic masculinity presents
a particular set of meanings and practices as natural, universal, commonsense,
inevitable and unquestionable (Buchbinder, 1994); this knowledge is made available
for men to give meanings to their experiences and to act. That particular forms of
masculinity or sexuality are privileged does not mean these are the only ways of
knowing or being, they do however tend to be the taken-for-granted position.

A post-structuralist approach not only explores how men use cultural resources to
construct, thereby giving meaning to, experience, but also what cultural resources are
available in specific local and historical contexts. The cultural resources that men
draw on in the construction of experience include representations (Buchbinder,
1998). A representation is an articulation of discourses (Weeks, 1991) and as such
will depict some of the different knowledges that are available about male sexuality
in that particular culture and time. One representation may articulate different, and perhaps contradictory, discourses (Buchbinder, 1998). With many meanings available, it becomes vital to examine the positions that individual men take up in relation to these discourses. It is no longer sufficient to assume a representation will have the same meaning and impact on all men, as was the case with media effects research reviewed in the previous chapter.

The literature reviewed below analyses texts - interviews, cultural material - to explore the immediate past: the discourses that were available, the meanings they made available to people, and the consequences of these for practice. In addition to providing a framework within which to understand and act in the world, a discourse also makes available particular locations or positions for individuals. This concept of positioning has been used in a range of research (Hollway, 1984; Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Stenner, 1993) and is informed by the theory of positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990). A discourse addresses us in a particular way (Parker, 1997), be it as man, lover, father, patient, or consumer. The ways of being called or hailed by the discourse are subject positions. A discourse will have a number of limited positions available, with different privileges and responsibilities - both in terms of speaking and action. Subject positions are differentially available to individuals, in a way that is related to the discourse itself (Gilfoyle, Wilson, & Brown, 1992), and as such act to confer power unequally (Hollway, 1984). An individual may resist the positions being made available by a particular discourse, by invoking an alternative discourse. Though as noted above, some discourses are hegemonic and are therefore more difficult to resist.

Within post-structuralism, the term subjectivity is often used in place of self or identity. Subjectivity is the “the condition of being a subject, dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to particular discourses and practices and produced by these” (Henriques et al., 1984, 1998, p. 3). A person will be simultaneously located in a number of different discourses and these positions may be contradictory. This allows us to account for contradictions within an individual’s accounts of self or experience. In the moment of speaking, not only is an individual’s location in a range of discourses relevant but also their history as a subjective being, what Phoenix et al. call “histories of previous positioning” (2003, p. 191).
A number of writers have questioned the implication that subjectivity is (merely) an effect of discourse (Burr, 1995) or the interaction of many discourses (Henriques et al., 1984, 1998). Hollway and Jefferson (1998) have argued that discourse theory can be deterministic; it does not provide an account of why people invest in certain discursive positions and not others. If a subject position is a possibility what explains why a particular subject position is taken over another? And how do we account for individuals who are in difficult or ‘troubled subject positions’ (Wetherell, 1998). These questions are about what structures discourse at the personal level (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2003), this is a different emphasis to most post-structuralist discourse analytic studies that are concerned with the social level. However, some writers have suggested that post-structuralist theory is perfectly adequate for addressing these issues (see for example Davies, 1997; Davies et al., 2001). Alternatively, a rational model is adopted which suggests that subjects are free to choose subject positions (A. Jones, 1997)

One resolution to these questions has been to introduce ideas and concepts from psychoanalytic theory, in particular the notion of unconscious processes and dynamics (for a discussion of the in/compatibilities between post-structuralism and psychoanalysis see Henriques et al., 1984, 1998):

While cultures make available the subject positions we can inhabit, the ‘investment’ that people have in these subject positions is not necessarily captured by the articulation of the discourse themselves, rather, it may hinge on unspoken and at times unspeakable events, experiences and processes, all of them ‘cultural’, but also deeply embedded in subjectivity. (Frosh et al., 2003, p. 42)

Frosh et al. (2003) draw on Object Relations Theory to examine the needs that are met by the positions young men adopt in relation to hegemonic masculinity (see also Phoenix et al., 2003). Hollway has undertaken a similar analysis in her work on gendered subjectivity, though her emphasis is different (Hollway, 1984, 1984, 1998, 1989; Hollway & Jefferson, 1998, 2000). She uses Klein’s concept of defence mechanisms (splitting and projection) to examine how subjects defend themselves
against an unconscious threat (Henriques et al., 1984, 1998). These attempts to theorise both “the constructing activity of social processes and … the agenetic struggles of individual subjects” (Frosh et al., 2003, p. 41), by integrating post-structuralist and psychoanalytic approaches are often characterised as social or cultural psychoanalysis (Wetherell, 1999). This is not a common approach in the constructionist literature on sexuality reviewed in the section below. It is worth noting however, that whilst it is an important aspect of Wendy Hollway’s work, many writers utilise Hollway’s findings without acknowledging the psychoanalytic context from which they arose.

As with all theoretical perspectives, a post-structuralist approach delimits the kinds of questions that are asked about the world. Carla Willig suggests that within the approach being outlined here, research questions would focus on examining “what kinds of objects and subjects are constructed through discourse and what kinds of ways-of-being these objects and subjects make available to people” (2001, p. 91).

The rest of this chapter will review work that has described the discourses that construct sex and male sexuality (and indeed female sexuality and heterosexuality); that which has explored how men negotiate the subject positions made available in these discourses, and work that has examined the implications for men’s sexual subjectivity and experiences.

3.2. Research on discourses around sexuality

Wendy Hollway’s landmark work on talk about heterosexual relationships (Hollway, 1984, 1998, 1989) is undoubtedly the model for much discursive research on sex and heterosexuality, and many subsequent researchers have used both her findings and her approach in work on sexuality and gender (for example Braun et al., 2003; Gavey et al., 1999; Gilfoyle et al., 1992; McPhillips et al., 2001; Roberts et al., 1995; Wight, 1996). It is important to briefly mention the rich literature on young people and sexuality, which owes a debt to Hollway’s work but does not always draw directly on it. Much of this literature examines the production of heterosexuality in

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6 The data collection method utilised by Hollway (1989) was quite different to most of the work that followed. She drew on data from four sources: individual and group dialogues with male and female friends, a residential mixed gender group, a mixed gender focus group, and a women’s group.
Hollway explores how subjectivity is constituted through the gender differentiated positions in discourses concerning sex. She contends that heterosexual relations are the primary site where gender subjectivity is constituted. Hollway’s focus on gender differentiated positions and heterosexual practice reflect her explicitly feminist position which theorises heterosexual relations as the primary site of inequality (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). There are two facets to Hollway’s thesis. The first is concerned with identifying and describing discourses relating to sexuality and exploring the subject positions these discourses make available to men and women. The second is concerned with theorising the investment individual men and women have in taking up particular subject positions. In addition to an analysis of power, Hollway utilises psychoanalytic theory to examine why individuals take up particular positions in particular discourses. This latter part of her work has received less attention, and will receive brief attention in this review.

Hollway identifies three discourses concerning sex through which gendered subjectivity is produced: male sex drive discourse, have/hold discourse, and permissive discourse (Hollway, 1984, 1998). It is a testament to the comprehensiveness of Hollway’s innovative work that these discourses form the basis of much subsequent work in this area, and are often considered the dominant discourses of heterosexuality (Gavey et al., 1999). Unfortunately, whilst a great deal of the published research reports the presence of these discourses in men and women’s accounts they rarely demonstrate this with reference to data. This is important as discourses are neither static nor stable, we would expect differences across time and culture groups. Hollway’s definition of a discourse highlights its local and historical nature:
A set of assumptions which cohere around a common logic and which confer particular meanings in the experience and practices of people in a particular sphere. (1984, p. 63)

The following review examines the implications for men in their positioning within available discourses in terms of sexual rather than gendered subjectivity. For example, what sexual practices are available or privileged? What possibilities are there for negotiation and communication? How are men’s needs and desires produced and addressed? In addition, the knowledge that different discourses produce or allow about the meaning of sex and the nature of male sexuality, is also of interest.

**The male sex drive discourse**

Man’s sexuality is directly produced by a biological drive, the function of which is to ensure reproduction of the species. (Hollway, 1984, 1998, p. 231)

This discourse articulates the position that men are driven to have sex with women, and that this drive is natural and normal, a biological necessity. Further, this drive is positioned as uncontrollable (Hollway, 1984). The biological and reproductive reasoning (Gavey et al., 1999) underlying this discourse means that certain sexual practices are privileged, namely vaginal intercourse. Heterosexual sex then becomes a progression, with vaginal intercourse as the goal (Gavey et al., 1999). This discourse is evident in men and women’s talk around sex and relationships in references to men’s desire to plant their seed, the naturalness of intercourse, and the body having been built and programmed for intercourse, amongst other issues (Gavey et al., 1999). This naturalisation of men’s sexual needs, and of vaginal intercourse as the preferred practice, renders it almost unquestionable. In a recent Australian survey with over 500 rural youth, only nine mentioned activities other than penis-vagina intercourse when answering the question - “what does sex mean to you?” (Hillier et al., 1999). Similar findings have been reported by Gavey, McPhillips and Braun (1999) in New Zealand, and Bogart, Cecil, Wagstaff, Pinkerton and Abramson (2000) in the USA. Vaginal intercourse as the defining act
of heterosexual sex was central to President Bill Clinton’s denial that he had ‘sex’ with Monica Lewinsky. He famously claimed ‘sex’ had not occurred because the physical contact had been oral not genital (Stein et al., 1999). This is also seen in safer sex campaigns where safer sex is understood to mean sex with a condom, that is vaginal intercourse, rarely are other sexual practices promoted (Waldby et al., 1993).

The male sex drive discourse is central to the medical model of sexuality discussed in the previous chapter and to the limited focus on physiological understandings of sexual dysfunction. Within this model, male sexuality is reduced to the penis, which is logical within the male sex drive discourse because of the reproductive explanation for sex. The penis is both the indication of male desire - or ‘need’ - and the means for satisfying it. It becomes imperative that the penis functions adequately. Whilst the male sex drive is unstoppable, the penis is not; as we have already seen, it is particularly vulnerable to aging (Chapter 2). This is clear in Australian promotional material for non-prescription homeopathic products like Horny Goat Weed or Vigorex; Horny Goat Weed is widely advertised and available through pharmacies, while Vigorex is only available through mail order. The advertising for these products emphasises youth, performance and potency; customer testimonials make this clear - “I feel like a teenager”, “my partner and I are behaving again like we did when we were first dating”, “after a 60 minute power packed session”. The images are of young and muscular men, with one image for Horny Goat Weed depicting a woman lying with her eyes closed, her hands held above her head by a muscular Adonis. References to unleashing drives and natural urges evoke the male sex drive discourse.

Within the male sex drive discourse, the culmination of sex is signalled by man’s orgasm (Bogart et al., 2000). The satisfaction of men’s drive, through the image of ejaculation is a common feature of hard-core pornography (though see Chapter 5 for alternative reading of the ‘money shot’). Because they are naturalised by a biological understanding, men’s sexual ‘needs’ are privileged in this account. Within this framework, the meanings ascribed to men and women’s behaviours are different, and what men and women can do is also different. The subject position in this discourse is confined to men (Hollway & Jefferson, 1998), women are seen as the object that
stimulates men’s natural drive. However, Hollway does not regard the position of women in this discourse as inherently powerless. Women can actively take up the object position in this discourse by using their ability to elicit men’s sexual desire. The focus on men and men’s biological drive within this discourse does, however, mean that sex is understood as something men do to women: the penetration of a passive vagina by an active penis (Hillier et al., 1999). Men are driven to pursue, and women “recognising this biological necessity yield and submit” (Kippax et al., 1990, p. 536); within the male sex drive discourse women are always receptive. It is thus clear how the male sex drive discourse is often called on in explanations for sexual violence, where once ignited by woman, male desire is unstoppable. Gavey and her colleagues (1999) found the notion that once stimulated a man should not be stopped until he is satisfied was evident in accounts from New Zealand women aged 18 to 50 years. This not only privileges man’s ‘needs’ over woman’s, but also makes negotiation very difficult.

In an analysis of shared meanings in heterosexual men and women sexual encounters, Crawford, Kippax and Waldby (1994) found the male sex drive discourse was the dominant frame for understanding many sexual encounters. In men and women’s accounts, the driving force behind the encounter was male sexual need. The women, in accounts given by both men and women, were objects of these drives. Women’s positioning as object resulted in a lack of voice or autonomy. In many of the accounts women did not speak or where not listened to. Women were also positioned as object by being exchanged or shared between male peers. One consequence of this positioning was an absence of any space for negotiation. Crawford and colleagues found that this discourse was a feature of most early sexual memories. In accounts where pressure featured, it was ubiquitous; in some of the accounts, the indication of men’s sexual desire was sufficient to create a sense of obligation in women. With the male sex drive discourse the dominant framework for both understanding the encounter and for determining what action can be taken, there was no other position for women to occupy. Women’s desires and voice, indeed their subjectivity was denied. Crawford et al. (1994) suggest resistance is the only option.

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7 Accounts from 13 women aged 30 to 50, and 4 men aged 21 to 42. The women’s accounts were collected from memory groups that met 3 to 5 times; men’s data was from a discussion group that met 4 times. Conducted in Sydney, Australia.
for women, they cannot have any voice if they remain positioned as object within the male sex drive discourse

Crawford and her colleagues note that in situations where the male sex drive discourse is implicated, men are under considerable pressure to “do something” (1994, p. 577). The biological imperative brings with it significant pressures for men. For, if there is a biological imperative for men - real men - to have sex, then what are the consequences for a man that resists or refuses this? Crawford et al. argue that it is very difficult for women to find space for negotiation in situations where the male sex drive discourse prevails, but they fail to consider the implications for men. What space do men have for negotiation? There is considerable silence around this issue in the research, perhaps demonstrating the hegemonic nature of the male sex drive discourse - there is rarely any question that men ‘really are’ driven to have sex. It is not difficult to see how this discourse is particularly onerous on young men, where sexual encounters are often taking place in a much more public domain under the scrutiny of a peer group.

In describing this discourse, Hollway (1984) argues that the knowledge produced by the male sex drive discourse constructs male sexuality in a particular way and this confers power unequally. This discourse allows men to deny their desire for intimacy and relationships, which in turn allows them to deny their dependence on women - a position that confers power on men. This aspect has often been ignored by subsequent research (see Gilfoyle et al., 1992). It is not only men who have access to power however. It is a significant, though rarely discussed, consequence of men’s positioning within the male sex drive discourse that it is often during sex that men experience themselves as the least powerful (Segal, 1990). It is not simply that men want to have sex: within this discourse, sex is framed in terms of a physiological need. There is a sense then that men are enslaved to this need. It is women who have the power to deny this ‘necessity’. Men reduced to ridiculous ploys trying to convince women to have sex with them is a common representation in men’s magazines (see analysis in Chapter 5). This is clearly in conflict with hegemonic masculinity, which according to Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thompson (1994), is invested with power; there is nothing powerful about a man using mating techniques borrowed from snails (see Chapter 5). One of the demands of hegemonic
masculinity is that men exercise their power over women. In failing to secure sex, men are not just failing within the discourse of the male sex drive, but also in terms of wider expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

It is men’s vulnerability that was the focus of a study conducted by Holland et al. (1994) in the UK. Carried out with men aged 16 to 25 years, Holland and her colleagues talk about young men in sexual relations with women, under pressure to be “victorious gladiators in the sexual arena” (p. 122), where the audience is not a sexual partner but the crowd of judging peers. The central argument here is that for these young men sexual relations are a means to achieving masculinity. In line with Hollway, they argue that this male model of sexuality is a defence against vulnerability. According to the researchers, young men are vulnerable in three ways: being in a relationship may make their dependence visible; women they are in relationships with may not conform to cultural notions of femininity, which reflects on men; and finally in attempting to meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity men may fail. One of the strategies young men use to manage these vulnerabilities is performance stories. That is, talk of sexual experience in male peer groups where the competitive frame of the peer group often leads to exaggerated accounts that present an image of a “macho, knowing and experienced male” (p. 130). This allows young men to demonstrate their prowess and therefore prove their masculinity. Within these accounts, the woman involved is irrelevant, the aim is to achieve the goal of sex with minimum contact; what Holland et al. call the “hit and run approach” (p. 133).

In a Scottish study with the 58 men aged 19 years, Wight (1996) reported similar findings. Sex is a means to achieving status with peers. The motivation is to demonstrate masculinity through sexual conquest - “the audience for this victory is the male peer group” (p. 131). Men are not interested in relationships, because they lack status value. However, Wight distinguishes this from the male sex drive discourse, suggesting an alternative - the predatory discourse. This is largely based on his participants not utilising a biological explanation for their sexual behaviour; though he acknowledges some did. According to Wight, references to drives or biology were largely absent from these men’s accounts. Some referred to social explanations such as their behaviour being in line with their upbringing. It is not clear how useful this distinction is, however, the lack of biological explanation does
not take away from the driven quality accorded to male sexuality. It is worth noting that in an earlier study with adolescent boys aged 14 to 16 years, Wight (1994) notes that many young men described sexuality as socially constructed; in the excerpts he cites however, young men refer to libido and physical sexual pleasure in terms of biology. The central features of Hollway’s discourse remain - vaginal intercourse as the privileged sexual practice, women as objects, and the connection to the achievement of masculinity. However, the focus of Wight’s discourse is perhaps more explicitly on status: “physical sexual pleasure is of less importance than the opinions of one’s male peers” (p. 154).

There is a notable difference here between Hollway, and the research conducted by Wight, and by Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thompson. For Hollway, the denial of dependence is central to masculinity, and this is achieved within a heterosexual relationship. For Wight, and for Holland and colleagues, the achievement of masculinity is also deemed connected to denial of vulnerability but this is achieved within a same-sex peer group. The distinction is in terms of who the vulnerability is being hidden from. This difference in emphasis may be due to the age of the participants in each study. For Hollway’s participants, the primary relationship, and hence the significant site for the negotiation of their masculinity, was with their long-term female partner. In the other studies the young men’s primary relationships were with peers not female partners, so they remain the primary site for negotiation of masculinity. Regardless of whom men are hiding their vulnerability from, it is women who are positioned as having the power to grant access to sex. Crawford et al. (1994) argue, if women were autonomous in sexual encounters, then they may refuse sex, which would be experienced as a challenge to masculinity. In refusing sex, women are preventing men from demonstrating themselves to be acceptably masculine to their male peers (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994). Thus, the reduction of women to the status of object can be understood within this discourse as a defence against this: for an object has no power to refuse, and if it does, this refusal has no significance.

To summarise then, men are positioned by the male sex drive discourse as needing sex, therefore they must pursue it, women may refuse so they are denied a voice and reduced to object. But men are keenly aware the situation only functions as long as
women acquiesce, reminding men of their dependence on women. The paradox of course is that in attempting to deny men’s dependence on women, the male sex drive discourse merely reinforces it. This potentially produces significant anxiety for men, for as much as the male sex drive discourse positions men as sexually driven, the sociocultural reality is that there are limits to the power men have to determine sexual situations. The male sex drive discourse has been described, with some slight variations, by researchers in different social, ethnic, economic and age groups, in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The knowledge produced by this discourse about male sexuality is hegemonic, for it is clearly the most pervasive and common sense way of understanding male sexuality (see the discussion of the Human Sexual Response Cycle).

It is worth reiterating that one of the most powerful aspects of this discourse - indeed the most enduring across the variations suggested by various authors - is the notion that men are driven to sex, and therefore always desire it (a point reinforced in the accounts given by Adams et al., 1996; J. Crawford et al., 1994; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994; Wight, 1994). This is also evident in the analysis of magazine representations described in Chapter 5, where there was never any suggestion that men did not want sex, by which it was clear vaginal intercourse was implied. Men are under considerable pressure to pursue sex, from whomever - as long as it is woman. It is almost unintelligible for men not to want sex; it raises questions about their masculinity and their heterosexuality, and the attractiveness of the woman they are rejecting (Gavey et al., 1999).

**The have/hold discourse**

The second discourse described by Hollway, have/hold, is associated with Christian values of monogamy and family life (Hollway, 1984). Within this discourse, sex is part of a committed relationship. In common with the male sex drive discourse, sex is for the purposes of reproduction. The reproductive focus of this discourse again limits sexual practice to vaginal intercourse between men and women. The meaning of sex within this discourse is in terms of a demonstration of commitment, emotional connection and love. In contrast to the male sex drive discourse, women’s sexuality
is the focus of this discourse. The desire for children and family life is the motivating force for women within this discourse, and sex is only desired as a means to achieving this. Framed in this way, sex is only sanctioned within the context of a relationship, or at least on the promise of one.

The have/hold discourse is pervasive in popular culture aimed at women - romantic fiction, magazines, daytime television dramas and ‘chick flicks’. Ussher (1997b) describes representations of women in girl’s magazines from the 1970s as focused on romance, the motivation at the heart of girl’s sexuality being true love and not lust. Similar work by McRobbie (1991a) shows men positioned within a male sex drive discourse as simply after one thing (sex) but women searching for romance. Even in contemporary girls magazines where sex is talked about explicitly, the context is always love; this is clear in an example Ussher cites “giving pleasure to the man you adore” (1997b, p. 32). This contrast between men driven by physical and biological needs and women driven by emotional needs demonstrates the dominance of the male sex drive and the have/hold discourses in positioning men and women. The two discourses are largely complementary (Hollway, 1989).

This disparate positioning of men and women can easily be seen in representations from popular culture. Positioned as the object in the have/hold discourse, men are subject to a number of expectations, which women may ‘manipulate’. A woman deliberately getting pregnant, or lying about paternity, in order to trap a man into a relationship is a popular soap opera theme; it was a major storyline in the 2004 series of Neighbours. The representations are not usually so blatant, with women making themselves attractive in order to attract and keep a man being more common. The advertising campaign for women’s deodorant Impulse has used this idea for many years. Although the advertisements have changed in content, the theme is always the same: a man walks past a woman who is wearing Impulse deodorant and is overcome by his attraction to her. The man is always shown to lose control or forget what he is doing - he buys her flowers, runs across lanes of traffic, drops his groceries, and in a recent version forgets for a moment he is gay - his ‘natural’ drive takes over and he’s snagged, something demonstrated by some romantic gesture. The woman has manipulated the situation by using his weakness - his uncontrollable drive for heterosexual sex. The different positioning of men and women - men want sex,
women want romance - is demonstrated nicely by the contrast between this and an advertising campaign for men’s deodorant *Lynx* that screened on Australian television, 2003-2004. This references the *Impulse* advertisement but draws on the male sex drive discourse - a man wearing *Lynx* causes women to become sexually excited and pursue sex with the man. While the man in the *Impulse* campaign forgets he is avoiding a relationship, in the *Lynx* campaign the woman forgets she is avoiding sex. The naturalness of the drive for sex is demonstrated by the depiction of the cycle of life across a number of species, in the advertisement. We are shown a mosquito biting a man, begin eaten by a frog that mates, which is eaten by an old man, who mates and dies, the man’s remains are eaten by a worm that is swallowed by a tequila drinker and so on. The ‘*Lynx* effect’ is only ever possessed by the male, regardless of species.

One of the most significant differences between the meaning of sex in the male sex drive and the have/hold discourses is the shift from the individual to the relationship. In have/hold, sex is a property of the relationship. Its function is related to the relationship, so the lack of sex then has serious consequences: how can commitment and love be demonstrated if there is no sex? This is particularly so for men, whose sexuality is still largely understood within the male sex drive discourse. Advertising for a range of medications for erectile dysfunctions can be read through the have/hold discourse. It is not because of a man’s need for sex that he should see his doctor, but because of the consequences for his relationship. Much of Pfizer’s advertising for Viagra has utilised this. In one example of advertising material aimed at medical professionals, titled *Viagra. Restores natural erectile function* (1998), there were two images: before and after. The first of a couple lying on either side of the marital bed, turned away from each other, she is asleep, he’s wearing pyjamas, lying awake and worried. The tag line “For years, erectile dysfunction kept them apart”. The second image of the couple naked, the bed covers crumpled, she is kissing him, he is smiling and enjoying her attention, their wedding rings are clearly visible. The tag line “Now you and Viagra can help bring them back together”.

Because he cannot get an erection, the couple cannot have sex - the male sex drive discourse privileging intercourse - and this is problematic because the lack of sex is preventing any kind of intimacy, connection or indeed communication. Another leaflet from Pfizer, titled *How’s Your Love Life* (2001), this time aimed at men and
distributed through pharmacies, demands attention with the question “How’s your love life?”. The use of the word ‘love’ instead of ‘sex’ reinforces the idea that a man’s ability to get an erection is fundamental to a couple’s relationship because of what sex represents within the have/hold discourse. A free ‘information’ video produced by Pfizer and distributed through doctors surgeries, titled “A man’s condition, a couple’s concern”, featured a cover photo of a couple in bed, she is wearing sexy lingerie but looks despondent, he looks at the viewer with pleading eyes. All of this promotional material utilises the meaning of sex within the have/hold discourse - as signifying closeness, intimacy, and commitment (Wight, 1996). Recent research in New Zealand (Vares, Potts, Gavey, & Grace, 2003), on advertisements for Viagra and related discussions in the popular media, suggests that these themes are not unique to the limited ‘informational’ material discussed here. The material examined in New Zealand was direct to consumer advertising, which is illegal in Australia; however, the striking similarities between the material discussed here and that presented by Vares et al., suggests there is little difference in the representations of sexuality and sexual dysfunction contained in material aimed at men.

These same meanings were evident in Roberts et al.’s (1995) examination of women faking orgasms during sex. They argued that faking an orgasm could be understood in terms of the have/hold discourse. Many of the women provided an account of faking orgasm that is based on protecting their relationship - which Roberts and her colleagues argue is about protecting both men’s positioning with the male sex drive discourse and a discourse around male sexual skill (which is discussed later). This demonstrates one of the differences between the male sex drive and have/hold discourses: individual sexuality is constructed differently for men and women. In the male sex drive, men possess a sexuality, women do not. In the have/hold discourse women have a sexuality but it is not autonomous, a woman must get a husband/lover before her sexuality can be intelligible. Even in the have/hold discourse, it is men’s sexual needs that are privileged. One of the consequences of this positioning of

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8 The Vares et al. research also presents a very interesting examination of men’s readings of these representations.

9 Accounts from individual interviews with 75 first year university students and 19 same-sex focus groups (3-8 people per group); most participants were aged under 25 the oldest was 45. One third of the data came from men. Conducted in Sydney, Australia.
women as wanting a relationship is that men can see their drive for sex, as understood within the male sex drive discourse, as leading to them being trapped into a relationship (Hollway, 1984; Hollway & Jefferson, 1998). Within the have/hold discourse men have responsibilities in addition to their rights to sex (Kippax et al., 1990). Clearly, the consequences of the positions available within this discourse are slightly different for single men and men in relationships. For men in relationships, their partners are willing to do anything for them in order to protect the relationship; this has the potential to give men enormous power (Wight, 1996).

In another interview study with men aged 16 to 21 years, it was reported that men who understood their sexuality within the male sex drive discourse were seen as ‘bastards’ (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994). This was not necessarily a bad thing, they were merely interested in sex and risked nothing emotionally so they experienced no negative consequences when rejected. However, ‘bastards’ were not free from positioning within the have/hold discourse. Men who continued to conduct their sexual relationship with reference to the male sex drive discourse, can come under negative scrutiny and indeed social sanction. There are limits for the ‘bastard’: he foregoes intimacy and emotional connections in his relationships. In one account that Holland et al. cite, ‘bastards’ were contrasted with ‘nice’ men who were interested in pursuing a relationship and not simply sex. Because these ‘nice’ men did become emotionally involved with women, they were vulnerable to hurt. ‘Nice’ men take up the subject position in the have/hold discourse. The different positions and associated consequences, in these two discourses remind us that there are always multiple discourses and positions circulating, and that these are often contradictory.

Together the have/hold and male sex drive discourses produce a male sexuality that is satisfied as long as sex is available. Men then are happy to be in a relationship because it guarantees access to sex; that is, they take up the position as the object of the have/hold discourse. The way the intersection of these two discourses is described by Kippax et al. (1990) suggests it produces a very comfortable situation for men in relationships. If women do not sexually satisfy or are otherwise unavailable, a long-term illness for example, then it is understandable if men go elsewhere. This is because the have/hold discourse operates in conjunction with the male sex drive discourse:
While a wife gives her body, her sexuality and her reproductive power to her husband, he need only give her the fruits of his labour, his material wealth. The woman’s self is more thoroughly caught up in the exchange, while the man may feel himself free to engage in other sexual relationships. (Kippax et al., 1990, p. 239)

To be fair, it is women’s experiences that Kippax and her colleagues are interested in when they discuss these discourses. However, if we consider the male sexuality imagined here, it is in danger of reifying the male sexual drive discourse. Men have relationships because it gives access to sex; men are positioned as wanting sex because their sexuality is constructed by the male sex drive discourse.

The male sex drive discourse whilst hegemonic, is not the only sexual discourse available for heterosexual men. Some men do take up the subject position in the have/hold discourse: they express a desire for a relationship not (only) for sex but for support, acceptance, connection and intimacy. How do we account for this? Especially as it would appear to contradict the male sex drive discourse. What does it mean if men position themselves within the have/hold discourse? If we return to Kippax et al.’s description above, are the same meanings and practices conferred on men if they take up this traditionally female subject position? Why do only some men take up this position? Hollway’s work specifically addresses why men may be invested in some positions and not others. Utilising the psychoanalytic concepts of signification and defence mechanisms, she argues that a discourse not only produces a particular set of meanings, it suppresses others.

Men’s motivation for placing women as subject of the have/hold discourse and themselves as subject of the male sex drive discourse, is that they can disown their own feelings of need and vulnerability which are engaged in sexual relationships. (Hollway, 1989, p. 67)

The desire for support, acceptance, and connection makes men feel vulnerable so they resist these feelings. Hollway argues that the have/hold discourse comes about because men project these feelings on to women, thus women become the subject of
this discourse - they are positioned as wanting and needing relationships. This allows man to understand his desires for a woman in terms of sexual need - as signified by the male sex drive discourse. Thus, he has no expectations and there is no danger of being let down, disappointed or hurt: he retains the power. Hollway draws on Lacan to argue that the desire for the other is connected to a desire for the mother. The history of positions that constitute the investment men have in taking up the subject position in the male sex drive discourse, and the object positions in the have/hold discourse, are in part due to the history of significations of desire. The earliest signification of desire was connected to the mother, thus desire comes to be associated with vulnerability in the face of the mother (for an elaboration of this position see Hollway, 1984, 1998).

In the accounts Wight (1996) elicited from men there is evidence of men enjoying being positioned within the have/hold discourse as both object and subject. Wight argues that in the accounts he collected, half of the young men positioned themselves as the subject of the have/hold discourse. He suggests an amended name of romantic discourse, because the men understood their relationships in terms of love. Wight claims his analysis that men can take up the subject position in the have/hold discourse is a “crucial modification” (p. 159) to Hollway’s argument. Wight’s analysis also demonstrates how a man’s position in discourse may change across the course of a relationship. In some of the accounts men appeared to shift from the subject position in have/hold discourse at the beginning of the relationship to an object position as the relationship progressed. Wight does not speculate as to why men may seek a holding relationship but change positioning once they are in one. It is possible that they find their expectations of intimacy and connection are not met so shift to the more reliable and acceptable position in the male sex drive discourse, where the expectation of sex is likely to be met. It is also possible that the experience of sustaining intimacy and connection, the reality of it, is experienced as threatening and so men shift positions to defend against their vulnerability.

Wight also demonstrates how men may take up different positions or draw on different discourses to understand the same event or experience, for example describing a sexual experience for peers may be different to how it is described to a partner or even to an interviewer. In his study, he found that whilst some men took
up the subject position in the have/hold discourse when talking with peers, they appeared to be reluctant to do so with their partners. That is, not telling their partners how they feel about them, but telling male friends. This clearly demonstrates how taking up the subject position in the have/hold discourse conflicts with hegemonic masculinity - not in the desire for a relationship but in the acknowledgement of this to a partner. The distinction between peers and partner may also be about protecting vulnerability, as expressing feelings to a partner would increase a partner’s power (Wight, 1996). This is a very important point as it neatly demonstrates Hollway’s initial description of this discourse - that is by positioning themselves as objects of the have/hold discourse, men protect the vulnerability that is produced by their need for intimacy and connection. This is achieved by projecting their need on to women, thus, allowing men to have their needs met without making themselves vulnerable by expressing it. What Wight demonstrates is that it is not a simple denial of the desire to have a relationship. What is required is that men protect their vulnerability when relating to their female partners. It is in this intimate relationship with a woman that men feel most vulnerable; hence, the meaning must be suppressed.

A final point to make about the interaction of the male sex drive and have/hold discourses is that in many cultural representations, there is a sense of an inevitable developmental journey, from sexual Romeo to loving partner. In his study with adolescent boys Wight (1994) found that many described a future relationship in terms of the have/hold discourse - a stable, monogamous marriage with children. His later study found that many young men characterised relationships early in their sexual history in terms of the predatory/male sex drive discourse, while later relationships were understood in terms of have/hold (Wight, 1996). In the accounts presented here, the male sex drive discourse was often associated with youth, inexperience, immaturity, while the have/hold discourse was associated with maturity and responsibility. Holland et al.’s (1994) evidence that a man continuing to understand his sexuality in terms of the male sex drive discourse is open to negative social scrutiny and is in danger of becoming a ‘bastard’ supports this. We also know from Wight’s study (1996) that many men who began in the subject position of the have/hold discourse later shifted to the object position. However, all of this work is based on young men or men in relatively short relationships. Apart from Hollway’s
work, there is little research on the negotiation of these issues by older men, or men in long-term relationships.

**The permissive discourse**

Hollway's third discourse highlights the historical nature of discourse, the participants in her study having become sexually active in the 1960s and 1970s. The sexual revolution and second wave feminism created a network of meanings and possibilities that differed from the apparent truths of the male sex drive and have/hold discourses (Wight, 1996). Sex has a very different meaning in the permissive discourse. This discourse retains the biological underpinning of the male sex drive discourse in that sexuality is natural; further “because it spontaneously exists…it has a right to be expressed” (Hollway, 1989, p. 56). In the wake of the women’s and gay rights movements, the right to the expression of this sexuality applies equally to men and women. Finally, the focus of sex is pleasure and enjoyment, not reproduction. Sex does not need to take place within a monogamous relationship, and so takes on a very different meaning: it is “inconsequential and meaningless fun” (Hollway & Jefferson, 1998, p.411). Sex and sexuality have been returned to the individual and are not framed in terms of a relationship as in the have/hold discourse (Wight, 1996). Hollway suggests the permissive discourse is a logical extension of the male sex drive discourse; the central features remain but women now have drives too (Hollway, 1989). Moreover, like the male sex drive, it “permits the suppression of emotions concerning relationships (need, love, dependence, commitment) through displacement on to the principle of sex drive” (Hollway, 1989, p. 57).

The permissive discourse positions men and women as equally driven by their need to express their natural sexuality, so either could actively initiate sexual activity (Kippax et al., 1990). The positions available to men and women within this discourse, and the meanings it conveys on sex, are deeply challenging to the restrictions imposed by the have/hold discourse; in particular, the sexual double standard is challenged. However, some authors have suggested that the sexuality women are seen to possess is like men’s rather than different but as valid as men’s.
Gilfoyle et al. (1992) describe the sexuality being given free expression in the permissive discourse as distinctly masculine, to the extent that it is a celebration of promiscuity and responsibility-free sex (similar points are made by Kippax et al., 1990; Wight, 1996). This promiscuous and responsibility-free sex is the model of sexuality produced by the male sex drive discourse, rather than inherent to masculine sexuality; Gilfoyle et al. (1992) run the danger of reifying the male sex drive discourse. I am more inclined to accept Hollway and Jefferson’s (1998) suggestion that the lack of a discourse around women’s active sexuality means that the possibility for women’s sexual agency is reduced thus allowing discourses of heterosexuality to be structured around male desire (see also Fine, 1988; Tolman, 1991). Of course, it is also problematic for men that the only framework for constructing an active engaged sexuality is the male sex drive, though there is a notable silence in the literature around this issue.

The move away from reproduction opens up the possibility of a much broader range of acceptable sexual practices. Indeed Kippax et al. (1990) argue that the permissive discourse holds the best opportunity for the transformation of sexual practice. Wight (1996) however notes that in his work with young men that the relationships that were understood within the permissive discourse tended to be short lived, and the lack of commitment and opportunity to establish trust meant experimentation was unlikely to occur. In group interviews with 30 men and women around the topic of accounting for intercourse, Gavey et al. (1999) found a preference for vaginal intercourse during casual encounters because it was perceived to be the least personally risky. In a situation where little is know about the other, where there has often been no opportunity to establish intimacy or trust, the reliable heterosexual script is employed - kissing, touching, intercourse (Gavey et al., 1999). This suggests that the permissive discourse may not be so accommodating to the transformation of practice.

The positioning of sex outside relationships can be productive however. Unlike the male sex drive discourse, the aim of the permissive discourse is mutual satisfaction, which requires mutual recognition of sexual desire. This not only balances men and women’s sexual needs but also allows women a voice to express desire. Indeed, not only can women initiate sexual activity, it is acceptable for them to gain and display
sexual knowledge and experience. Kippax et al. (1990) argue that the reason the permissive discourse was mostly found in accounts of casual encounters is because the short lived nature of these relationship ensures there is no affront to the codes of heterosexuality. The relationship is not being understood in terms of the have/hold discourse so rules and conventions can be tested or ignored. Kippax et al. note that women must ensure that they remain positioned in the permissive discourse, for if they become positioned by the male sex drive discourse they lose the possibility of determining their desire and are in danger of being labelled ‘slags’. It is a demonstration of the hegemonic position of the have/hold discourse that the permissive discourse appears limited to casual relationships\textsuperscript{10}.

A consequence of sex being positioned as the expression of a natural drive is that, as with the male sex drive discourse, a lack of interest in sex must be accounted for, however here it applies equally to women. In the male sex drive and have/hold discourses women’s desire and pleasure were unimportant; in the permissive discourse however, women are expected to both want and enjoy sex (Gavey et al., 1999). In his study with young men, Wight found that a woman’s lack of sexual interest was attributed not to a lack of sexual drive but to a perception of risk (Wight, 1994): it was riskier for women to have sex because they may become pregnant. The construction of women’s sexuality in these accounts draws on the permissive discourse, and reflects how material realities, like pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, may contribute to how an individual is positioned with any single discourse.

It may appear that the permissive discourse has very little consequences for men beyond those outlined within the male sex drive discourse. There are however two significant differences and both are associated with the permissive discourse’s construction of a desiring female sexuality. Firstly, women may initiate sexual activity. In interviews with Australian men aged 23 to 37 years, Waldby et al. (1993) found a general dislike of ‘direct’ women. However, in their accounts some men expressed a desire to be passive. This was often in terms of not having to be

\textsuperscript{10} Though it is worth considering what discourses are drawn on to give meaning to ‘open relationships’ or practices like sadomasochism or role play within long-term relationships, which appear to share some of the more productive aspects - mutual sexual desires for example - of the permissive discourse.
responsible for sex, which is understandable given the attendant dangers of rejection if a woman is not interested or humiliation if he fails to sexually satisfy. The explanation that Waldby et al. provide for men’s discomfort parallels Hollway’s argument that the have/hold discourse allows men to deny their vulnerability. Men fantasising about active women, but preferring passive women, is “a desire to be passive, tempered by a fear of the loss of control implied in that position” (Waldby et al., 1993, p. 254). A possible adjunct to this is that in the permissive discourse, as with the male sex drive discourse, it is unintelligible for men not to want sex. By maintaining control, always being the initiator, men prevent a situation where they may have account for a lack of interest in or desire for sex. There are very few studies - qualitative or quantitative - examining men’s experiences of situations where they did not desire sex (see Chapter 2).

The second noteworthy difference to the male sex drive discourse is that women are now expected to seek out sexual experiences; this produces self-knowledge about their own body and sexual desires. Indeed women are expected to become knowledgeable about sex more broadly where previously this would have tarnished a woman’s reputation. They may even have more knowledge or experience than their male partner. This increase in experience also means that women can compare a current partner with previous ones, and in the era of serial monogamy may continue to compare with future partners. Knowledge and experience creates the possibility that women can determine their own sexual pleasure, but more importantly, it is now acceptable for them to articulate their desires. It is obvious why this may be threatening for men. Sex defined within the male sex drive and have/hold discourses remained a male domain. The threat in the permissive discourse is that women may expose a man’s lack of knowledge and experience or give negative feedback on his performance. Arguably, this threat is managed by restriction of the permissive discourse to casual encounters. In Holland et al.’s (1994) study many of the men described having their first sexual experience with an experienced and knowledgeable older woman. This is seen as a strategy for managing vulnerability, as the encounter is less likely to be a disaster than it may be with an inexperienced partner and the relationship is unlikely to continue.
The discourse of reciprocity (and the pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse)

The pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse has received relatively little attention in the literature since being described by Gilfoyle, Wilson and Brown (1992), but is worth briefly reviewing here. They characterised it as a modernisation of the male sex drive discourse, the essential difference being sex is now constructed as an exchange. Men receive sex - vaginal intercourse - in exchange for conferring pleasure on women, which is understood as orgasm. Sharing the same biological basis as the male sex drive discourse, men require sex to satisfy urges but they must now physically satisfy a woman by giving her an orgasm. The notion that it is men who confer pleasure is important here, as women remain passive objects: “receptacles who relinquish control over bodies” (p. 217). There is no possibility here for women to have pleasure on their own and pleasure is explicitly understood only in terms of orgasm. Gilfoyle et al. argue that this discourse is an illusion of mutuality, as it merely gives the appearance of having transformed the male sex drive discourse to address feminist critiques. However, men still initiate and are responsible for all sexual activity.

Based on accounts from 12 men and 13 women aged 20 to 30, Gilfoyle et al. reported that many women described sex as something that happened to them, rather then something they were active participants in. In men’s accounts, expending a certain amount of time and work on the production of women’s orgasms was considered an enlightened position. Many men described how happy they were to make an effort for their partner’s sexual pleasure. There was also considerable reference in accounts from men and women to sex as a demonstration of work and technique. Men did a good job, put in a good effort, and did not want to leave the job unfinished. They also report many mechanistic references. Other authors have discussed similar themes, but little of the subsequent research has adopted the pseudo-reciprocal gift discourse; indeed these issues are usually framed as part of a male sexual skill discourse (see below).
Building on Gilfoyle et al.’s research, Braun, Gavey and McPhillips (2003) describe a discourse of reciprocity. In interviews with 30 heterosexual men and women, they found evidence of a principle that both partners in a sexual encounter were entitled to an orgasm. As with many discourses around sexuality, this discourse relates differently to men and women; that is, the woman’s orgasm (often through cunnilingus) was ‘given’ by the man in exchange for an orgasm through coitus. The assumption that a woman’s orgasm is the product of a man’s work - or sexual skill - was common; this sexual skill discourse is explored below. Within this discourse of reciprocity, men and women are expected to both give and receive an orgasm; this does not only produce a sense of entitlement however. Braun et al. argue that this discourse may produce an obligation to orgasm; moreover, the association between male orgasm and coitus produces a coital imperative. They explore this in terms of the implications for women, such that a woman who does not have an orgasm may be positioned as ‘not normal’. Equally, she may be positioned as having let her partner down and revealing his insufficient performance. There are clearly implications for men also. Within the discourse of reciprocity, man is responsible for woman’s orgasm, a positioning that invariably reinforces the performance orientation of male sexuality. Indeed, he must produce one if he is to be free from accusations of selfishness; this was a common anxiety in men’s magazines (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the failure to give his partner an orgasm may be positioned as due to a lack of sexual skill, a framing that threatens his masculinity. These issues are explored in more detail in the discourse of male sexual skill outlined below.

**A male sexual skill discourse?**

Talk of male sexual skill or technique is ubiquitous in men and women’s accounts of heterosexual sex (Braun et al., 2003; J. Crawford et al., 1994; Flood, 2001a, 2001b, 2003; Gavey et al., 1999; Roberts et al., 1995). References to the skills and techniques men use in sex, as well as to the work or effort expended appears to form a coherent framework for understanding male sexuality, which suggests it may constitute a discourse. Although the notion of male sexual skill is implicit in much of the literature, and occasionally explicit, for example ‘sexpertise’ (Potts, 2002) or ‘the
knowing male’ (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994), a discourse of sexual skill has yet to be explicitly named in the literature.

In 1970, Koedt argued that the persistence of the vaginal orgasm myth was due to men’s reluctance to acknowledge that women’s pleasure may not be dependent on vaginal intercourse. The male sexual skill discourse explicitly addresses this. The coital imperative has not been abandoned it has merely been augmented with an imperative for women’s orgasm. The female orgasm is no longer tied to vaginal intercourse; indeed that intercourse is not how women gain the most pleasure is a feature of many cultural representations (see the magazine analysis in Chapter 5). However, men are still central to female pleasure. Previously, the vaginal orgasm required penetration by the penis. Now men’s sexual technique is essential for women’s pleasure. Unlike the permissive discourse where other sexual practices were often only theoretically available, they are an indispensable part of the male sexual skill discourse.

Flood (2001a; 2001b) describes the male sexual skill narrative produced by a number of participants in his research with men aged 18 to 26 years, as centring on notions of skill and proficiency. The production of women’s pleasure, as demonstrated by her orgasm, is central to this. The men in his study talked about a set of physical and technical skills that could be applied to any woman’s body. This resonates with men’s accounts described several years earlier by Roberts et al. (1995). Many men’s accounts included narratives of technique and work; here male sexuality was an “abstracted practice of knowledge and skill” (Roberts et al., 1995, p. 525). In both studies woman were reduced to object, an “undifferentiated body” (Roberts et al., 1995, p. 526) for men to demonstrate their skill on. Positioning woman as a passive object receiving man’s work, arguably means they are no longer the active subjects imagined by the permissive discourse, with desires and knowledge of self and body. The subject position in this discourse is only available to men.

Within this discourse, women’s sexuality and pleasure is defined both by and for men; men determine what pleasure is and this allows them to prove their mastery. As with the male sex drive discourse women are completely silenced, except to confirm men’s skill through ecstatic orgasmic moans. In part, this is due to the lack of space
for communication; it is not a demonstration of knowledge or expertise if a man has to constantly ask if he is doing the right thing (Flood, 2001a, 2001b). A similar finding was reported by Waldby et al. (1993) in their interviews with young men. Though women would be an obvious source of knowledge - what they enjoy, what they desire - men appeared reluctant to communicate with their partners in this way. Men expressed a preference for women who responded to men’s technique rather than women who guided or shared knowledge. It was seen as a negative reflection on a man’s technique if a woman indicated what she wanted. Dialogue was only considered when a problem occurred (Waldby et al., 1993).

Women’s reduction to object can thus be understood in a similar manner to the male sex drive discourse; if women had a voice they may express their dissatisfaction or voice an alternative desire. It becomes imperative that men ‘know’ about sex but without reference to women, as is apparent in much of the magazine analysis in Chapter 5. In their study Crawford et al. (1994) noted that sexual technique was a recurring theme in group interviews with 30 men and women. They report the account of a young man who stopped a sexual encounter because he did not know what to do. Positioned within this discourse he could not ask his partner for help or guidance: men cannot be anything other than expert. This has considerable implications for men; not only can they not express their ignorance but they must avoid any indication of anxiety, doubt or lack of confidence. The practical implications of this for the negotiation of safer sex, contraception and consent are clear.

The focus on ‘sexpertise’ (Potts, 2002) in this discourse, suggests that there is a repertoire of skills that can apply to any woman, to any body; as if rules can be distilled through reading, talking to peers and practical sexual experience. In some accounts men appear to see themselves as scientists (Waldby et al., 1993), investigating women’s bodies and responses, gathering information, honing skills, etc.. Waldby et al. point out the danger in this - a woman’s responses can be tested against a man’s ‘expert’ knowledge. The fascination in men’s magazines with how to tell if a woman ‘really’ is having an orgasm can be seen as part of this. It is not simply that a woman may fake because a man’s technique is not ‘good enough’; she has the power to fake and so withhold the truth about his technique from him.
Clearly, it is problematic that women’s orgasm is the sole definition of female pleasure, and that women’s pleasure is not sought for the sake of her pleasure, but as proof of mastery and skill (Braun et al., 2003; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994). The apparent lack of visible proof of women’s orgasm requires a performance that Roberts et al. (1995) suggest owes much to pornography. Consequently, the absence of a woman’s orgasm needs to be accounted for. Moreover, the confluence of the sexual skill discourse and the discourse of reciprocity discussed previously, is the expectation that if the man has given a woman an orgasm - by applying his expertise - then he is entitled to his own orgasm (Braun et al., 2003). In interviews with heterosexual men and women, Braun et al. reported that some men described non-reciprocal sex (where he has not received an orgasm, but has given one) as cheating.

Central to this discourse is the construction of women’s sexuality as problematic and as requiring work, which contrasts with men’s sexuality which is natural and straightforward (Roberts et al., 1995). The construction of women’s difficulty with orgasm within this discourse produces male expertise; if she orgasms it is only because of his work. In the accounts Roberts et al. (1995) examined they found that where a woman had ‘failed’ to orgasm a man’s lack of skill was often cited as the cause. A quest to improve skill or acquire new techniques then followed; if this failed, the problem was then shifted to woman’s faulty body. They also suggest that once learnt, men do not develop their knowledge or techniques. However, the prevalence of ‘how to’ articles in men’s magazines which are aimed at sexually experienced men contradicts this; Men’s Health readers are overwhelmingly aged 25-50 years (Roy Morgan, 2003). Indeed, the development of a set of skills and a body of knowledge is often represented in men’s magazines as like any other hobby or area of expertise, honing one’s craft is very much central to this (see Chapter 5).

In an episode of the American sitcom The Drew Carey Show shown in Australian television in 2004, Drew’s parents are experiencing relationship problems: his father is uninterested in his wife’s sexual pleasure. Drew attempts to broach the subject of sexual skill with his father, who claims that women cannot have orgasms. When his wife leaves him - because he can’t give her an orgasm - Drew’s father finally accepts some help and after applying his new found skill, produces an orgasm in his wife.
The generational differences here are clear; in his father’s day women did not have orgasms, indeed they didn’t want them. Now women want orgasms, and men must provide them. However, it was not the shame that he couldn’t give his wife an orgasm, or a desire to demonstrate his sexual skill that motivated the character in this sitcom to change. It was the threat that his relationship would end. Does the male sexual skill discourse operate in a similar manner to the have/hold discourse? Like the have/hold discourse, the attention is on women’s needs, effectively reproducing women as dependent on men for a relationship and for sexual satisfaction. The possibility that men desire a relationship for anything other than sex - a biological drive - is again suppressed.

One of the most significant differences between the male sexual skill and the male sex drive discourses for the positioning of men is the emphasis on control and mastery. A thinking mind and a controlled body are required (Roberts et al., 1995). Flood (2001a; 2001b) appears to argue that the sexual skill narrative is part of the male sex drive discourse and so contradicts the uncontrollable male sexuality that that discourse represents. It is clear that this is an alternative and hence competing discourse of male sexuality; the interaction of these two discourses has potentially negative consequences for men. The positioning of male sexuality as skilled and controlled rather than uncontrolled and rampant potentially produces much anxiety for men in their sexual practice. The male orgasm must now be postponed and the erection prolonged, with thoughts of football or work, pharmaceuticals like Viagra, or simpler external methods like penis rings. The psychological consequences of this detachment has not been examined.

**Critical evaluation of the research**

The social constructionist, and largely post-structuralist, sexuality research reviewed above sought to describe and explain the discursive worlds men inhabit, and to explore the implications for sexual subjectivity and sexual experience. In terms of evaluating how useful this research is for understanding the relationship between representations and sexuality there are a number of issues. The first issue relates to the feminist research agenda within which a great deal of this research has been
conducted. A central aim in much of this work was to examine power relations between men and women, with a view to identifying women’s power in heterosexual relations (Hollway, 1984) or to addressing power imbalances (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). The value of this work and the agenda for political and social change are not in question. Rather, when attempting to apply these research findings to understanding heterosexual men’s experiences of their own sexuality and their negotiation of cultural representations, it can raise difficulties. For example, whilst acknowledging a range of masculinities, Holland et al. are ultimately interested in the “social factors which explain how men, in spite of their social divisions, weaknesses and vulnerability, continue to exercise such extensive power over women in their sexual relationships” (1994, p. 123). The aim of the current research study is to examine men’s understandings of their own sexuality, and the way they negotiate cultural representations and discourses; not how this (re)produces men’s power over women.

In the studies cited above, the differences between men and women were of primary interest. The examination of differences between men and what might explain their differential positioning or changing use of discourses was often ignored. The exception to this are Wight’s (1994; 1996) studies which looked at class differences between men, and the role of gang membership, locality, and employment. Both Flood (2001a; 2001b) and Wight suggest that previous work that focuses on women and the implications of male sexuality for women may have resulted in a limited understanding of heterosexual male sexuality. Flood argues that the men in his study did not only draw on the dominant discourses or meanings described by previous research. Wight also attempts to build on previous work to produce a more diverse understanding of masculine sexuality, arguing that existing research emphasises the predatory nature of masculine sexuality (Wight, 1996). Both of these authors argue for a more complex and diverse picture of male sexuality.

A substantial amount of this literature has also been concerned with heterosexual relations and the implications for HIV/AIDS education and transmission. In Australia, the heterosexuality and HIV/AIDS project at the National Centre for HIV Social Research at Macquarie University focused on communication and negotiation within heterosexual relationships (J. Crawford et al., 1994; Roberts, 1992; Roberts et al., 1995). The Women, Risk and AIDS Project in the UK examined sexual practices
and understanding in the context of HIV, this was followed up with a smaller study with young men - the Men, Risk and AIDS Project (Holland et al., 1990; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Scott, & Thomson, 1994; Holland, Ramazanoglu, & Sharpe, 1993; Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994). More recent work in New Zealand has extended this work with older men and women (Gavey et al., 1999). The very few studies exclusively on heterosexual men have also been conducted in the context of HIV/AIDS. For example, Daniel Wight’s (1994; 1996) research with young Glaswegian men examined heterosexual behaviour, HIV salience and risk practices; Michael Flood (2000; 2001a; 2001b; 2003) explored the sexual cultures of heterosexual men in Australia and the implications for HIV/AIDS transmission.

On a practical level, the aim of studies conducted in the context of HIV/AIDS is to understand the cultures and expectations of heterosexuality in order to focus safer sex education campaigns, with particular interest in how men and women’s positioning in these cultures may be different. As Roberts (1992) notes, the negotiation of safer sex practices requires negotiation around sexuality and practice. It is important then to understand the sociocultural context in which these negotiations might take place in order to understand the constraints and possibilities that may be available, differently available, to men and women. At the heart of this research is an interest in how men and women talk about (hetero)sexuality, sexual behaviour and relationships. In particular, how individuals refer to, utilise, accept and resist cultural discourses around sexuality and gender. And how these discourses make available particular understandings or knowledge with which experience is made intelligible (J. Crawford et al., 1994), be that social, emotional or bodily experience. There are however potential limitations to this research agenda, namely the emphasis on particular aspects of sexuality and sexual practice, for example negotiation, trust, risk and condom use (di Mauro, 1995).

One of the most significant limitations in the literature reviewed here is the great reliance on young men. This is problematic for two reasons: age and relationship duration/experience. The majority of the studies cited in the discussion above were conducted with people aged under 25, with some as young as 14. In many of these studies the focus is on loss of virginity, negotiating casual relationships, and talk of sexual experiences within same-sex peer groups. These issues are not so relevant, if
at all, for older men, particularly those in longer-term relationships. Wight noted that in his interviews with 19-year-old men, many appear to shift from the subject position in the have/hold discourse to the object position as the relationship progressed. These are young men with limited relationship experience. What happens to men in relationships for 20 or 30 years? How do men in their second or third long-term relationship negotiate these discourses; are there differences? How is relationship status, experience, or duration implicated in men’s understanding of their sexuality? There are clearly great variations across age, both in terms of sexual experience and relationship status. Just as cultural discourses are not equally available across gender, nor are they across age. Thus, the overrepresentation of young people may portray a particular version, or experience, of male sexuality that may not be valid across all age groups.

Recruitment for sexuality research is generally difficult, and many of these researchers noted the particular difficulty recruiting men (Waldby et al., 1993). There is a danger then that convenience samples are overused resulting in similarities rather than differences between participants. This is not however a criticism about a lack of representativeness. Post-structuralism theorises a subject produced, in part, by the social domain, therefore an account from any one participant tells us about that social domain. Hollway (1989) describes sampling participants on the basis of difference as she was interested in women who would be positioned differently within discourses. It is therefore more fruitful to include participants that are likely, on the basis of researcher interpretation, to be constructing their experiences differently. Whilst there may be other relevant positionings in the research discussed above, perhaps ethnicity, in terms of age and relationships status the samples tended to be relatively homogenous.

3.3. Summary

The research reviewed in this chapter is explicitly concerned with subjective experience and the cultural resources men draw on to understand their sexual experiences. Further, it theorises representations as articulating multiple and contradictory meanings, so the meaning of sex is not singular and unitary. What sex
signifies is of central concern, as is how this varies between not just men and women or cultural groups, but also for individual men. Instead of looking at how representations may make men behave in particular ways, this approach examines how men take up positions in a number of discourses made available through representations. The practices enacted by men and the meanings they give to these practices are made possible by the positions they take up in discourse. The relationship between representations and men’s sexuality is not simple and straightforward, but complex, multiple and often contradictory. It becomes imperative then to understand what discourses are available, and to examine how men negotiate the subject positions available to them.

The theoretical approaches adopted by the research examined above demonstrated that there are a number of different ways of understanding sexual subject positions available to men. The meanings made available by often competing discourses were not always consistent. It was also clear that discourse closed off or made available particular sexual practices. However, the experiences of older men were neglected, which means we do not know how men in long-term relationship negotiate the discourses identified. Much of the research sought to understand heterosexual relations in the context of HIV/AIDS or with the aim of changing gender power relations. This raised some difficulties when attempting to apply these findings to an understanding of men’s experiences of their sexuality.

Finally, representations are an important part of the cultural resources available to individuals to make sense of their experiences. However, in the literature examined here these cultural resources were only examined through individual’s accounts; though examples of these discourses from popular culture were provided in the review, systematic examination of localised representations has not been undertaken as part of the studies cited.
CHAPTER 4. A Framework for a Study of Representations and Subjectivity

In the preceding chapters, a number of different theoretical approaches to the study of heterosexual male sexuality have been examined. The literature in this area has been evaluated in terms of how it addressed the question of the relationship between cultural representations and men’s sexual subjectivity and behaviour. Issues were raised about the way mainstream psychological research had largely ignored the sociocultural dimension of sexuality, or examined it only in terms of its detrimental influence on, so called, normal male sexuality. Moreover, men’s subjective experience of their sexuality, the multiple meanings around sex and sexuality, and men’s negotiation of representations had received little attention. Issues were also raised around qualitative constructionist and post-structuralist research that has tended to focus on sexual health, particularly HIV/AIDS, and on younger people. More importantly, many of the studies reviewed examined gender differences and focused on the consequences of current discourses of sexuality for women; this focus provides a limited understanding of men’s diverse experiences of their sexuality. Thus, there is a need for an integrated analysis that examines the diversity of men’s experiences of sex and sexuality, which situates these experiences in the cultural and social contexts in which men live, and does not deny the symbolic or material dimensions of sex.

Unlike in positivist research, the specific research questions driving the current study evolved as the research progressed. This is common in qualitative research, where the research question is general and provisional; indeed, Willig (2001) suggests that
research is often a process of refining the research question. What was enduring throughout the research was an interest in the relationship between contemporary cultural representations of male heterosexuality and heterosexual men’s sexual subjectivity and behaviour. There was also an interest in developing an understanding of this complex and dynamic relationship, where culture was not simply theorised as a backdrop to or reflection of men’s sexuality nor as determining men’s experiences, and men’s sexuality was not theorised as the simple expression of a natural drive or as entirely symbolic. Therefore, the purpose of this research study was to explore men’s sexual subjectivity and behaviour, and their negotiation of cultural representations of male sexuality.

As the research progressed the general question developed into three specific areas of interest: (1) what are the different ways heterosexual male sexuality is represented in the accounts of individual men and in popular culture; (2) how are these ways of understanding heterosexual male sexuality taken up and resisted by individual men to give meaning to their experience of themselves, their bodies, their desires and their relations with women; and (3) what are the consequences for men of these different ways of understanding sex and sexuality.

Different methodological approaches were appropriate to address these different questions. Therefore, a mixed method design was employed, whereby individual and group interviews, a survey, and cultural materials were analysed using quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The first research question regarding the content of representations of male sexuality will be addressed through a media analysis and an analysis of men’s accounts of their sexuality which were produced in interviews. The second research question regarding men’s negotiation of representations in the production of their sexual subjectivity will be addressed by analysing men’s accounts which were produced in interviews. Finally, the third research question regarding the consequences for men of different ways of understanding male sexuality will be addressed through an analysis of survey data; the analysis of interview data will also address this question.

This first section of this chapter will set out the epistemological framework and methodologies utilised to undertake this study. The second section will address
recruitment and participant issues, and raise some issues around ethics and recruiting men for sex research.

4.1. Methodology

**Critical Realism: A framework for the research**

Critical Realism (CR\(^\text{11}\)) is based on Roy Bhaskar’s work on the philosophy of experimental and human sciences (Bhaskar, 1989; Collier, 1994; Greenwood, 1994; Lopez & Potter, 2001). In terms of its ontological assumptions, critical realism holds with a realist approach, acknowledging the physical reality of the body and the environment (Parker, 1992; Spears, 1997). In contrast to positivism, CR does not support the correspondence notion of truth that our knowledge of the world mirrors the reality of the world (G. Potter & Lopez, 2001). In terms of its epistemological assumptions then, CR can be considered a variety of constructionism, in that all constructionist perspectives “hold in common the epistemological belief that a totally objective reality, one that stands apart from the knowing subject, can never be fully known” (H. Rosen, 1996, p. 5). This ‘epistemic relativism’ (Parker, 1999) means acknowledging the linguistic and historical constitution of all knowledge (Pilgrim & Bentall, 1999; Willig, 1998), including recognizing that different research methodologies will necessarily produce different knowledge (Parker, 1999). Indeed some proponents of CR position themselves within social constructionism (see for example Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). The CR position contends that it is not reality that is constructed but “our theories of reality” (Pilgrim & Bentall, 1999, p. 262). A CR position, then “acknowledges that our knowledge of the world is necessarily mediated by, and therefore also constructed through, language (i.e. epistemological relativism) while maintaining that there are underlying structures and mechanisms which generate phenomena, versions of which we then construct through language (i.e. ontological realism)” (Willig, 2001, p. 123).

CR’s epistemological assumptions have consequences for the production of knowledge, and stand in contrast to a positivist framework which “assumes there is a

\(^{11}\) The term critical realism is a hybrid of two terms Bhaskar coined: his philosophy of science ‘transcendental realism’ and his philosophy of human science ‘critical naturalism’.
stable reality which is independent of the observer, and propose that an accurate understanding of reality is best achieved by means of precise, controlled, objective observation” (Yardley, 1999, p. 31). For Bhaskar, the scientific method cannot produce objective knowledge about the social world, because social science, unlike the natural sciences, examines open systems (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997). As Pilgrim and Rogers note, “the complexity and inventiveness of human agency and praxis in varying social contexts simply defy expert predictions” (p. 38). Therefore, research within social science should describe and explain and not attempt to predict, avoiding what Ussher calls the “predictive pretensions” of positivism (1999, p. 108). CR thus encourages the adoption of a variety of sceptical perspectives along with multiple methodologies (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997; Ussher, 1999).

The implications of a sceptical approach to knowledge production, is that none of the methodologies employed in the current study are positioned as revealing or uncovering the truth of men’s experiences. For example, the knowledges produced by the qualitative and the quantitative studies may diverge, however, one methodology is not privileged as giving better or more complete knowledge; this is reflected in the way mixed methods are utilised, outlined below in detail. Indeed, the knowledge produced by various methods is framed as evidence rather than explanation, which can then be used to construct convincing and useful arguments which are always provisional and open to contestation (Porpora, 2001). An important aspect of CR is the positioning of lay knowledge as legitimate (Pilgrim & Rogers, 1997); therefore, men’s understandings of sexuality are not seen as less valuable compared to the ‘expert’ knowledge produce by traditional quantitative methods, for example by the standardised measures utilised in the survey. All knowledge is deemed open to scrutiny and deconstruction (Ussher, 1999).

Some writers suggest that when it becomes a matter of practical application of research findings, those taking a relativist position (that is, many social constructionists) tend to become more pragmatic (Spears, 1997). For whilst the debate may take place in the world of relativism “we have to act in the substantive world as through it ‘really is’ as we construe it” (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997, p. 81). To this extent, the adoption of a CR approach can be seen as an explicit acknowledgment of a position implicitly taken up by many constructionists.
A significant advantage of CR is that it allows for an analysis of materiality, an important dimension in men’s experiences of sex. A CR framework moves beyond discursive analysis (Pilgrim & Bentall, 1999). The implications of this are clear in the interview analyses (Chapters 6 and 7) where material practices and consequences are considered. CR then, is an approach that allows a consideration of the materiality of men’s bodies, and of sex as an interaction between bodies, whilst considering the meanings of bodies and interactions that are always already situated within culturally available discourses. So whilst meaning is central to this study, because what male sexuality means can only be understood in terms of cultural discursive resources, and how we understand what occurs between men and women in sex is located within particular ways of seeing the world, at the same time we cannot ignore materiality.

There are commonalities between a CR approach and the endeavour undertaken by many working within qualitative, and often constructionist, frameworks to integrate material and discursive approaches. This is particularly so in health psychology and on work around sexuality (see for example Stoppard, 1997; Ussher, 1997a, 1997d; Yardley, 1996; Yardley, 1999, 1997). A material-discursive approach acknowledges that “all our experiences and knowledge are both substantive and symbolic - our beliefs have real, material roots and consequences, while our experience of physical embodiment cannot be isolated from our perceptions and interpretations of the meaning of physical states” (Yardley, 1999, p. 32). Those working within a material-discursive framework envisage a dynamic and complex set of relations, where the body is neither the source of sexuality as is suggested in a biomedical model that emphasises drives, hormones, physiology (Ussher, 1997c), nor is it merely a “passive object upon which socio-cultural practices impinge” (Yardley, 1999, p. 40).

Therefore, CR is a framework well suited to an exploration of the relationship between cultural representations and men’s sexual subjectivity and sexual behaviour. It allows a consideration of the dynamic and complex processes whereby men give meaning to real bodily events, such as an erection or a lack of an erection, and act in a bodily and material way within culturally available discourses.
A mixed methods approach

This research study utilised a mixed method design, employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as well as different qualitative methods at each level of the research (design, data collection and analysis). This section will outline the general principles of a mixed method design, including the benefits and how potential difficulties can be overcome. As outlined above, this research is conducted within a critical realist paradigm, which supports, indeed advances, the use of different methodologies.

Combining research strategies broadens the dimensions and scope of research (Morse, 2002), allowing the researcher to deal with issues in a complex social context (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2002). Moreover, and particularly relevant here, is that mixed methods allow the research to address the needs of different audiences (Newman, Ridenour, Newman, & Demarco, 2002); the industry partner’s specific interest in quantitative findings was alluded to in the Introduction to this thesis. Within the positivist paradigm, it is common to cite triangulation as a reason for combining methods, either across or within methods; that is, analysing data from different sources to reduce the bias inherent in each single source (Cresswell, 1994). This is problematic within a constructionist paradigm, as notions of bias and the idea that it can or should be reduced to get closer to the truth, have less currency (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Mertens, 2005). However, combining data from a variety of sources, and methods, can produce a broader picture of the various ways of understanding an issue, and allow contradictions and alternative perspectives to emerge (L. Allen, 2003a; Cresswell, 1994). This is more likely to reflect the complexities of the issue under examination. Moreover, the availability of different ways of participating in this study may have had the consequence of engaging a broader range of men. Denzin (1989) identifies different kinds of triangulation, and this study reflects all three. Theory triangulation was used to introduce multiple perspectives to “extend the possibilities of knowledge production” (Flick, 1998, p. 230); the interview analysis is a good example of this. Methodological triangulation was used both within- and between-methods; for example, different but overlapping concepts and
scales are used in the survey. Finally, investigator triangulation; a number of interviewers and analytic voices were employed, reflecting diversity of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and age.

The drawbacks of mixed method design are chiefly concerned with added methodological complexity, requiring knowledge of a variety of methodologies and paradigms (Cresswell, 1994). There are also potential difficulties drawing together the results of disparate, and perhaps opposing, methodologies; specifically, incompatible ontologies and epistemologies. The approach taken here to potential paradigm conflict, is to highlight complementary strengths, that is, “adhere to the tenets of rigor as defined within each paradigm” (Mertens, 2005, p. 295). Thus, the quantitative data was analysed according to the appropriate techniques and conventions of positivism, and the qualitative data according to constructionist, and specifically post-structuralist, assumptions. Each analysis was also presented within the normal conventions for each methodology.

There is a final and crucial point to make about the way mixed methods are employed in this study. While the relevant conventions and assumptions are adopted within each methodology - for example, the adjustments for Type 1 error in the quantitative analysis chapter - a sceptical approach is adopted overall. That is to say, the three studies in this research are all situated with a critical realist framework, as outlined above, and no one method was positioned as having greater legitimacy.

Research Design

A mixed method design implies the use of different methods to address the same research question (Cresswell, 1994; Mertens, 2005). In the current research study, mixed methods were conducted in parallel and sequentially. The three qualitative and quantitative studies (representations, interviews, and a survey) were conducted in parallel; in that each study was not intended to substantially affect how the others were designed, conducted or analysed. In practice, the analyses of the representations and interviews did have some bearing on each other. Within the interview study however, four different interviews methods were undertaken sequentially; each stage influenced the collection of the next. The design is summarised in Table 4.1.
Table 4.1. Research design

<table>
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<th>Method</th>
<th>Focus and constructs</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
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<td>1 Analysis of media</td>
<td>Representations of heterosexual male sexuality</td>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Semi-structured individual interviews with a peer interviewer</td>
<td>Hegemonic truths of heterosexual male sexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative interviews</td>
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<td>Semi-structured individual interviews</td>
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<td>Semi-structured focus group with a peer interviewer</td>
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<td>3 Survey</td>
<td>Endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unwanted sexual activity</td>
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Study 1: a textual analysis to examine representations of heterosexual male sexuality in contemporary Australian cultural material. A Foucauldian discourse analysis was conducted on eight issues of two men’s magazine titles, within a constructionist paradigm. This is reported in Chapter 5.

Study 2: an interview study to examine the relationship between cultural representations of heterosexual male sexuality and men’s subjective experience of their sexuality. Individual interviews were utilised to allow a more detailed exploration of a small number of men’s experiences of sexuality and negotiation of cultural representations. This methodology allows considerable flexibility, which is important as it allows the participant some control over the issues that are discussed. From a research perspective, this is useful as it allows different perspectives and concerns to emerge than are possible in a predetermined questionnaire format. Importantly, interviews introduce the contextuality and complexity of men’s experiences (Mertens, 2005), that are often missing in quantitative data. Qualitative methods are often characterised as inductive, as they allow the phenomena to emerge.
“without imposing preexisting expectations” (p. 230). It is important however not to understate the role or influence of the researcher in qualitative (or indeed quantitative) methodologies in the production of data (Burr, 1995). Both narrative and semi-structured interviews were utilised; the first allows a more exploratory focus and the latter greater possibility of comparison across men. In the current study, interviews are also appropriate as although there are various preexisting quantitative measures around sexuality, none have been used to examine the relationships between cultural representations and sexuality.

A focus group methodology was employed to allow an exploration of male sexuality through the interaction of group members (Frith, 2000; Mertens, 2005; Smithson, 2000). By exposing participants to each other, an issue is explored in a different kind of way to an interview between a single participant and an interviewer, this is because participants statements are “challenged, extended, developed, undermined and qualified” by other participants (see also Frith, 2000; Willig, 2001, p. 29). This method is particularly useful for examining differing perspectives, the dominance of particular positions or voices, and how alternate perspectives are negotiated (privileged or silenced) within a group (see for example Chambers et al., 2004; Frith, 2000). It is worth noting that these strengths are often framed as potential weaknesses in focus group research; for example, Smithson (2000) discusses the problems of dominating voices and making dissenting voices heard.

It is often suggested that focus groups are not appropriate for sensitive research topics (Crabtree, Yanoshik, Miller, & O'Connor, 1993); group members being considered likely to feel inhibited and so, not honest. Frith (2000) however suggests that group interviews may actually enhance disclosure in sex research because shared experiences encourage discussion, and participants expand on statements by others, often providing examples of their own experiences. Moreover, examining a sensitive topic, such as male sexuality, in a group setting is potentially useful as it allows an examination of how men negotiate their sexuality subjectivity in a social context they may perceive as more judgmental than an individual interview. It is the very tensions raised by the discussion of this topic in a group which are valuable from a research perspective. Further, the constructionist framework of this research shifts the focus away from revealing the true/real feelings/beliefs of participants. It is how the group
may allow or suppress alternative discourses and the process of subjectification which is of interest.

Morgan and Kruger (1993) suggest that focus groups are useful when there is a gap between professionals and their audience. To apply this to the current study, it is important to acknowledge the gap between the researched (men), and myself as the researcher (a woman) and to recognise what I cannot bring to bear in interviews with men about their sexuality. Focus groups were a good way of introducing alternative legitimate voices into the research. Within a focus group, each member is given permission to ask questions of the others. The focus groups also introduced a different interviewer-interviewee dynamic (Crabtree et al., 1993) as the groups were already established and the moderators were members of the group (see below). Willig (2001) also suggests that using participants who are already acquainted increases the likelihood of interaction between participants in the focus group, which is the raison d'être of focus group methodologies.

In two stages of the interview study, peer recruitment and interviewing\textsuperscript{12} was utilised. Peer interviewing is a methodology often utilised to access hidden populations, most notably in research with drug users (see for example Boys, Marsden, Griffiths, & Strang, 2000; P. Griffiths, Gossop, Powis, & Strang, 1993). In the case of the current research, it was a way to recruit men who may otherwise not have responded to advertising or calls for participants. Further, it is common practice in qualitative research to interview acquaintances or access participants through personal networks (see for example Gavey et al., 1999; Hollway, 1989; Potts, 2002). One of the advantages of this kind of recruitment and interviewing is that people may be more likely to participate if they know the researcher and so may be reassured about their reasons for undertaking the research. As a recent arrival in Sydney, I did not have a sufficiently extensive social or professional network to recruit acquaintances or pre-existing groups. Therefore, peer interviewing was a good alternative to personal networks, and provided a balance to the more anonymous recruitment techniques employed with the rest of the sample. In the case of stage IV,

\textsuperscript{12} All of the peer interviewers used in this study were students undertaking a postgraduate psychology course at the University of Western Sydney; the students used the interviews as data for the research thesis component of their course. All interviewers received training on interviewing, as well as support pre and post interviewing.
it also allowed pre-existing groups to be recruited. A final benefit of peer interviewing is that it introduced different dynamics into the interviews, some men being interviewed by an acquaintance and some by a stranger. Moreover, the mix of ethnicity, sexuality, ages, and research experience allowed diverse voices to be represented in the research. The interview study is reported in Chapters 6 and 7.

Study 3: a quantitative study to examine the relationship between cultural representations of heterosexual male sexuality and men’s experience of their sexuality. A survey methodology was utilised as this allows the collection of quantitative data from a large amount of men. Further, established scales covering different aspects of sexuality can be employed to facilitate comparison with previous research. This methodology allows sophisticated statistical analysis of the relationships between established psychological constructs like sexual satisfaction or sexual anxiety and men’s endorsement of particular accounts of sexuality. It also allows exploratory analysis of the relationship between these psychological constructs and men’s sources of representations of male sexuality. The established benefits of surveys make them particularly appropriate for sexuality research: most participants have some familiarity with this method, it is generally less threatening than face to face interviews, and it can be completed anonymously (Mertens, 2005). This study is reported in Chapter 8.

4.2. Participants - recruitment and demographics

The recruitment of participants was a significant issue in this research study, and it is appropriate to explore some of the methodological issues associated with it. In particular, there are issues around recruiting men for research, and recruitment and data collection via the internet. There is considerable overlap in the recruitment strategies for the qualitative and quantitative studies; rather than include a separate discussion in each analysis chapter these issues are addressed together here.
**Ethics**

The University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the research study. In addition, before implementation, all the recruitment strategies received approval from the UWS Ethics Committee. This included approval of the wording of advertising material and informational leaflets and posters. An extension to the ethics approval was sought for each new strategy envisaged; a number of strategies were refused approval\(^{13}\). The collection of data via the internet received additional ethics approval.

Every participant in the study was assigned a participant identification number. Every survey was assigned a survey identification number, and each interview an interview identification number. This allowed the data to be made anonymous, whilst also allowing monitoring of how many surveys were requested, who returned surveys, who had been invited for interview, who had attended an interview, and where participants were recruited from.

Before participating in either the survey or the interview study, a participant had to read and sign a consent form (example in Appendix A). For the online survey consent was ascertained by asking participants to click on a link indicating consent, before they accessed the survey. At the end of a page containing the same information as the hard copy consent form, a participant had to indicate their consent by clicking on a ‘yes’ button; this took them to the survey entry page. Participants who did not consent, clicked the ‘no’ button, and were redirected to a page thanking them for their interest. This method has been utilised by other internet researchers (Mustanski, 2001).

\(^{13}\) Specifically, any strategy that involved publicising (handing out leaflets) the study in a public space, for example, shopping centres, sports grounds and events, was refused ethics approval. I was not allowed to directly approach anyone to invite them to participate in the study, nor offer them information unless they came to me. The wording of leaflets about the study also received scrutiny; language had to be ‘innocuous’ - ironically, in all the media reporting of the study the language was considerably ‘sexed up’.
The consent form and information sheet assured participants that the information they provided would remain confidential, that it would be stored securely and would remain accessible only to researchers connected to the research study. In addition, participants were assured that if the study was subsequently published it would not include any identifying information; pseudonyms are used for the interview data. The hard copy consent forms were stored separately to both surveys and interview transcripts. For their own reference, participants were given an information sheet which included the same information as the consent form.

Additional approval was sought, and granted, to allow peer interviewers to conduct interviews. Consent forms and information sheets were modified to make participants aware that the interview would be used in this study and as part of the peer interviewers’ research projects (see example in Appendix A). In addition to ensuring that all peer interviewers were adequately trained to undertake interviews that had the potential to raise difficult issues, interviewers were advised not to pursue issues that would cause participants distress or undue discomfort. The information sheet and consent forms informed participants that they could cease the interview at any time, take a short break, or withdraw from the study altogether; this was reiterated during the introduction to the interview. Every participant was offered a copy of the interview transcript and audio tape; only two participants took up this offer. A final measure put in place was an offer of counselling to all participants who took part in an interview; counselling was provided through the Clinical Psychology Clinic at the University of Western Sydney. Although a few men asked for information on this service, because of confidentiality issues it is not known how many pursued this offer.

**Recruitment strategies**

The criteria for participation in this study were quite broad, participants had to be aged 18 years or over, heterosexually identified men, and living in Australia. Recruitment was focused in the Western Sydney area which reflected the interests of the industry partner, however, this was not used as criteria for exclusion.
Recruitment for the qualitative and quantitative studies took place simultaneously, and with the exception of the men in the peer interviews, participants for both studies were drawn from the same sample. All recruitment material publicised both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study. In practice, all participants who responded to the major recruitment strategies took part in the survey study first. Thus, the first six strategies described below are discussed primarily in terms of quantitative recruitment, for example in evaluating success. Discussion of the recruitment for the qualitative study follows.

**Sexpo**

Sexpo is an exhibition of sexuality, health and lifestyle, which is held annually in major Australian cities. The 2001 Sydney show attracted 50,000 people; according to a Roy Morgan poll conducted for the organisers, 44% of the attendees are women, and 60% are in couple relationships. Primarily an exhibition for the adult entertainment industry it includes retailers of sex toys, erotic movies, lingerie, etc as well as allied health and lifestyle retailers (mostly leisure). Recruitment took place at the Sydney exhibition over 4 days in July 2001; a stall was set up in a separate section of the show dedicated to health and community organisations. Leaflets publicising the study were handed out, and surveys were made available, with the expectation that men would take surveys away and return them in a prepaid envelope provided. In practice, the vast majority of men completed the survey on the spot.

This proved to be an incredibly successful recruitment strategy: 168 completed surveys were received with the overwhelming majority completed on the spot. It is worth contextualising this response - it took up to 20 minutes to complete the survey and because of the extraordinary response, men were often forced to stand up while completing.

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14 This information is from promotional information distributed to potential exhibitors.
Study Website and internet

The second recruitment strategy was to have a presence on the internet. Initially a simple website was created to promote the study. The website address was included in all advertising material and submitted to various search engines; the UWS School of Psychology homepage also contained a link to the site. Subsequently, the survey was put on the study website to allow men to complete it online.

This strategy was more useful as a data complete method, than for direct recruitment. Most men who completed the survey via the website had been recruited directly by other means, and were directed to the website to complete the survey. This is a very efficient way for participants to complete survey research; for example, a number of newspapers put a direct link from their website to the study website, which allowed men to quickly move from reading about the study in a news article to participating. In addition, it was a good resource for participants who wanted to know more about the study and the research team; information was provided about each stage of the research, the industry partner and the key researchers, ethical and confidentiality issues.

Western Sydney Community

The third recruitment strategy involved distributing information about the study, in the form of posters and leaflets, to community centres, community health centres, community services in the Western Sydney area, and to sexual health centres and clinics (including dedicated men’s sexual health clinics) across Sydney. In total, 155 information packs were sent out; five organisations requested bulk surveys (approximately 100) to distribute to clients. More targeted promotion was conducted via FPA Health, who put posters up in their family planning clinics and listed the study on their website. Information was also sent, via email, to sport and recreation groups based in Western Sydney, with most indicating they had forwarded the announcements on to their members.
It is difficult to ascertain how successful this strategy was; collating information on the community organisations was labour intensive, and there was a cost associated with printing and sending leaflets and posters to nearly 180 groups. The resulting recruitment could best be characterised as sporadic. A more targeted approach, perhaps establishing a relationship with specific organisations, may have been more efficient; a concerted effort to establish a connection with a key Local Government Area men’s health worker was unsuccessful. Perhaps the most disappointing outcome was the lack of success with FPA Health, with no men being successfully recruited through this source. One possible explanation is that very few men attend family planning clinics; however, posters and leaflets targeted at women - asking them to pass information on to men - did not appear to work either.

*University of Western Sydney*

The fourth recruitment strategy was to access staff and students through the University of Western Sydney (UWS). A call for participants was made through the staff and student email bulletin, announcements were made at some undergraduate psychology lectures, and surveys were distributed in a number of undergraduate psychology lectures. More targeted recruitment was conducted through the School of Psychology research participation week - a program designed to provide psychology students with experience of research participation that is held twice a year for 1st year students. Students are encouraged to participant in a range of experiments and surveys, for which they receive course credit.

Again, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this recruitment strategy, though the staff email bulletin appeared to be the most successful because it contained a direct link to the study website. The research participation week was less successful and constitutes a very small proportion of the total sample. It is worth noting that most men who were recruited through undergraduate lectures were not students, rather women students appeared to take surveys or information for male friends or relatives. This is a pattern repeated across the recruitment strategies, where women were important secondary recruiters. At Sexpo, for example, many women brought their male partner over to the study stall to find out about the research and encouraged them to complete (or take) a survey.
Men’s Groups and Organisations

The fifth strategy reflects a theoretical sampling approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) common in qualitative methodologies (Flick, 1998). Sydney has an extensive network of men’s organisations, informal groups, email lists and websites; it was theoretically important to recruit some of these men who seem likely to have a different perspective to, the men recruited through other sources, in particular Sexpo. To this end, information leaflets and posters were sent directly to all the men’s groups that could be identified in the Sydney area, to the moderators of email lists and bulletin boards covering a range of men’s interest areas, and announcements were placed in newsletters. Information leaflets and posters were also sent to eight community organisations running men’s programs (primarily concerned with fatherhood), for example the Uniting Church’s Burnside agency.

Encouraging responses were received from a few group organizers and some bulletin board moderators; the Men’s Health Information and Resource Centre (UWS) were particularly helpful. Overall, however the response was muted and very few men actually responded to the call for participants; however, more men came forward for an interview. There are a number of possible explanations for the disappointing response. The groups were a mixture of pro-feminist, men’s rights and men’s spiritual groups encompassing greatly differing political agendas; it seems likely that these men may have had a significant investment in the research topic and may have been suspicious of the research agenda. A more targeted approach of establishing connections with organisers and moderators, similar to that suggested in the community section above, may have alleviated (or confirmed!) any suspicions regarding my political agenda. Although it seems unlikely that as a woman, I would have been allowed to attend groups personally.

Media

The final major recruitment strategy was to utilise local media. Initial advertisements were placed in a local newspaper and a free street paper, with limited success. A media release distributed via the UWS’s Media Unit was very successful and
resulted in interviews with a local radio station and with a news agency (AAP - who
distributed the story to newsrooms Australia wide). The story was picked up by nine
national and local newspapers across Australia (extending as far as Perth and Cairns),
and two popular Sydney radio stations. A particularly fortunate occurrence was the
story appearing on the Sydney Morning Herald and NineMSN websites; this allowed
participants to access the online survey quickly. The support from the UWS Media
Unit was invaluable, generating interest in the study for several weeks. The response,
in terms of recruitment, was incredible with nearly 200 men completing a survey on
the website in a period of about 2 weeks.

Interview recruitment

The recruitment strategies described above also produced the sample from which the
individual interview participants were drawn. Men who expressed an interest in an
interview at any stage of the recruitment for the survey - either their initial response
to call for participants or a later response to participating in further stages of the
study - constituted the sample of potential interview participants.

For the second and third interview stages, men were invited to take part in an
interview; contact was by email, letter or phone. As the survey study was conducted
in parallel with the interview study this meant the men offered an interview were not
selected from a static sample. The second stage of individual interviews took place
prior to the Men’s Group, UWS and Media recruitment strategies; the third stage
took place after the Men’s Group and UWS recruitment, but prior to the media
campaign. All the interviewing was completed before the media campaign.

Of the 20 men recruited through this method, 16 eventually took part in individual
interviews. All of the men recruited through the quantitative study completed a
survey before they participated in an individual interview. This was not for any
methodological reason; in all cases, there was a significant time delay between the
survey completion and participation in an interview (the shortest being 1 month, the
longest 6 months).
**Peer recruitment**

The final recruitment strategy was peer recruitment/interviewing; men were recruited through the friendship and professional networks of the interviewers. In the first stage of interviews, three peer interviewers recruited nine men. In the fourth stage of interviews, four peer interviewers recruited 20 men into four groups. The groups were usually professional or friendship groups of which the interviewer was a member. In general, peer interviewers reported little difficulty recruiting men to participate in these interviews. Peer interviews had the advantage of an established relationship and a greater degree of flexibility in setting up interview location and time. Although all of the men recruited through peer interviewers received a survey, not all returned it.

**Recruitment issues**

**Difficulties meeting quantitative recruitment targets**

The original recruitment target, for the quantitative study, was 500 men. It took 18 months of active recruitment to achieve this target (551 surveys were received, of which 457 met inclusion criteria). Sexpo and the media release generated at least two thirds of the sample in a short time frame. Anecdotally, there was a perception that men are difficult to recruit because they do not have anything to say or are reticent about talking about themselves. The response at Sexpo and to the media release suggests this was not so. Indeed, feedback from many participants suggested that rather than an unwillingness to talk about sex and their sexuality, they felt they were rarely invited to speak; Potts (2002) reported a similar finding. However, it is perhaps significant that with Sexpo and the media release, the delay between men hearing about the research and having an opportunity to participate was minor. At Sexpo men overwhelmingly preferred to complete the survey on the spot; the media release and subsequent publicity, allowed men to easily and quickly access the survey online, at a time and location that suited them. The recruitment strategies that
required men contact the researcher for a survey, wait to receive it and then complete and return it, appeared less successful.

*Internet Research: recruitment and data collection*

Using the internet for recruitment and data collection is becoming increasingly popular, especially in sex-related research (Binik, Mah, & Kiesler, 1999; Mustanski, 2001). According to Mustanski there are a number of advantages and disadvantages associated with this method. Advantages include cost savings, convenience for participants, accessing hidden populations, peer recruitment, and anonymity. Disadvantages include difficulties estimating sample size, participation of non-target populations, sabotage and ethical concerns. The current study employed a number of strategies to alleviate the potential disadvantages of this method.

*Participation by non-target population*

The criteria for participation - heterosexual men aged 18 years and over living in Australia - were reiterated at a number of points prior to the participants gaining access to the online survey. Participants were asked to supply information on age, sexuality and postcode; those not meeting the criteria were excluded. As an additional measure, the IP address of the computer the survey was submitted from was collected. The American Registry for Internet Numbers was used to confirm suspect IP addresses as originating from outside Australia. Most internet providers now use dynamic IP addresses, so whilst an IP address could identify a particular service provider and country of origin it was unlikely that an individual IP address could be traced back to an individual computer. All IP addresses were stripped prior to data analysis.

*Sabotage*

Individuals deliberately misrepresenting themselves was of particular concern to the UWS Ethics Committee, and repeated submission of surveys is a more common concern (Birnbaum, 2004). There is very little any researcher can do to prevent deliberate misrepresentation by research participants, beyond the measures outlined
above with regard to non-target populations; this is however not an issue unique to internet data collection. In the data screening process, surveys with extreme or highly inconsistent responses were identified and excluded. The inclusion of IP addresses allowed monitoring of repeated submissions. In the event, there were no surveys that appeared to have been repeatedly submitted maliciously; this is a finding that has been reported by other researchers using the internet for data collection (Mustanski, 2001; Reips, 2000).

**Ethical concerns**

There are potential confidentiality, technology and data security issues associated with collecting data through the internet. At the time of data collection, there was no university policy or technical support available on using the university servers to host a research study website and collect data. As a student, rather than staff member, I was initially denied access to resources that would have allowed increased security of data collection; namely secure server storage. Initially surveys were being submitted to a student email account from a participant’s email address; this was problematic as it was not obvious to participants that their email addresses were being transmitted. Subsequent access to CGI scripts allowed anonymous submission of surveys; they were however still being sent and stored on the student email server. How electronic data is stored is an issue that needs to be taken seriously by researchers, and ethics committees; it is unclear for example how the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 applies to research data collected over the university servers (University of Western Sydney, 2004).

**Interview location and participant safety**

It was a condition of the ethics approval that all interviews be conducted in a public place, for example an office at the university, and not a respondent’s home. The Ethics Committee framed this in terms of “the safety of interviewees”. The limited literature on women interviewing men (for example Lee, 1997; McKee & O’Brien, 1983; Smart, 1984) focuses on the vulnerabilities women face in interviewing men, rather than the other way around. Indeed, Deborah Lee suggests that “it remains prudent for women interviewers to be realistic about the potential for trouble that any
man may present. I would suggest that this caution is especially salient when an
interview juxtaposes privacy of setting with an agenda specifying discussion of sex”

To address personal safety concerns, for both interviewer and interviewee, all the
individual interviews were conducted in a location that was relatively public, but
allowed for a certain amount of privacy. At the University of Western Sydney, a
room in the psychology training clinic was used. This imposed some time and day
restrictions as these rooms were only available outside teaching hours; the downside
of this is that the clinic is in the basement of a building and outside clinic hours was
usually deserted. A second location used was a research office at FPA Health (the
industry partner); availability was limited to one day per week. This was a busier
location; however, because I was offsite when the interview was over I had to leave
very shortly after the interviewee. To address this, I always made a point of leading
the man out to the main reception area and then returning to the office to pack up my
things; I would leave a reasonable time delay before leaving the building. Additional
measures that were employed included only conducting interviews during office
hours, and ensuring participants reported to an administration office in the building
rather than my personal office or the interview room, when they arrived for
interview.

Initial concerns that the measures imposed - especially time and location restrictions
- would reduce the number of men or kinds of men, available for interview proved
unfounded. On being invited for interview, no one declined on learning the available
times or locations for interviewing. Further, it was a welcome surprise that the
majority of individual interview participants were full time employed; some were
shift workers or had flexible working arrangements.
Recruitment outcomes and participant demographics

Recruitment targets were set prior to the research beginning (Ussher & Sundquist, 1999); specifically to distribute the survey to 500 men, conduct 10 focus groups with 50 men, and undertake individual interviews with 10 men. The use of a more complex methodological framework (see above) necessitated some modification to qualitative recruitment targets. Four stages of interviewing were employed, such that more men were recruited for individual interviews and fewer for group interviews than originally planned.

A total of 551 surveys were received from men. Initial screening for data integrity, and to ensure that all participants met inclusion criteria, identified 94 surveys for exclusion. Surveys were excluded for the following reasons: participants identifying as gay (14); participants identifying as female to male transsexuals (2); participants aged under 18 (2); submitted online by men not in Australia, identified via their IP address (53); abandoned after first section completed (15); duplicates submitted online, confirmed by IP address (4). The remaining 457 surveys were from heterosexual men, aged 18 and above, living in Australia at the time of completion; this comprised the final data set. Table 4.2 reports where these participants were recruited from; this table also gives a breakdown of recruitment source by age group and by relationship status. The men in this sample were aged between 18 and 77, with a mean age of 33 years; with similar proportions of men identifying themselves as single, or in a married/de facto relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2. Survey recruitment source by age and relationship status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media, study website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values represent raw numbers of men who were included in data analysis. Not all participants completed the age and relationship status questions.
Forty five men took part in the interview study. Table 4.3 reports where these participants were recruited from, and gives a breakdown by age group and relationship status. Men ranged in age from 18 to 63 (average 33 years). A greater proportion of men identified as single, than in a married/de facto relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Source</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-35</th>
<th>36-45</th>
<th>46+</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Sep/Div</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexpo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media, study website</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community orgs</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer recruiter</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Values represent raw numbers of men who were included in data analysis.

Personal demographic information for both samples is contained in Table 4.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Survey Study</th>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Study</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 25</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 45</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 plus</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Status</th>
<th>Survey Study</th>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Study</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/de facto</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/divorced/widowed</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children at home</th>
<th>Survey Study</th>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Study</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N^</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (includes shared custody)</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* ^This demographic information was not collected for Stage I interviews.
Socioeconomic information for both samples is contained in Table 4.5.

### Table 4.5. Socioeconomic demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Survey Study</th>
<th>Interview Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/Technical Qualification</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under/Post-Grad Qualification</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Not answered</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N^</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20000</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20000 to $39999</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40000 to $59999</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $60000</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed (full/part time, casual)</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Not answered</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *^This demographic information was not collected for Stage I interviews.*

Ethnic and cultural information for both samples is contained in Table 4.6.

### Table 4.6. Ethno-cultural demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth</th>
<th>Survey Study</th>
<th>Interview Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia/NZ</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe/USA/Canada</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Not answered</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language spoken at home</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N^</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language other than English</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not answered</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *^This demographic information was not collected for Stage I interviews.*

*Representativeness*
It is conventional in positivist research to provide information regarding key demographic characteristics of the drawn population, this is done to give an idea about the representativeness of the sample used in data analysis. The following discussion, of the representativeness of the survey sample, is included to meet these expectations.

The most recently published census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002a) reported that there were 1,967,687 men in the Sydney area in 2001, 80% of whom were aged 15 years and over (1.5 million men). This roughly constitutes the adult male population that is of interest in this analysis. The comparison of a number of key indicators, all based on the 2002 Census data, gives some indication of the representativeness of the sample of men recruited for this analysis.

The men in the sample are slightly younger and more likely to be single than the drawn population. The average age of men in this sample is 33 years, compared to 34 years in the drawn population. In the drawn population 14% were 15 to 24, 32% were 25-44, 33% were 45 plus; this compares approximately to 30%, 46%, and 17% for the survey sample respectively. Single men are over-represented and married/de facto men under-represented: 45% of men categorised themselves as single, compared to 35% in the drawn population. This discrepancy may be partly due to different descriptors used; the Census asks for ‘never married’, this study used the term ‘single’, which will include men who have previously been in long-term or de facto relationships but never legally married. Men who categorised themselves as married/de facto in the study constituted 40%, compared to 49% in the drawn population.

The men in this sample are more highly educated than the drawn population. Two thirds of the sample had a post-school qualification, compared to 44% of the drawn population. Moreover, the proportion of the sample with an undergraduate degree (27%) was more than twice that of the adult male population in Sydney (12%), and the proportion of the sample with a postgraduate qualification (19%) was four times that of the general population (4.5%).
Finally, 35% of men in the drawn population speak a language other than, or in addition to, English at home; these men are underrepresented in the current study, where only 10% reported speaking a language other than English at home. The language(s) spoken at home may have been underreported in the current study as participants were asked “What language do you speak at home”; they were not encouraged to list all languages they may speak at home. The relatively low proportion of non-English speakers may also reflect the recruitment strategies employed; all study material, including the survey, was in English only and no specific recruitment was conducted for non-English speaking communities. However, 32% of the survey sample were born outside Australia/New Zealand, which compares more favourably with the drawn population proportion of 37%.

4.3. Summary

This chapter addressed epistemological and methodological issues relevant to the research study. It outlined a critical realist framework, whereby multiple methodologies could be utilised and material and discursive dimensions explored simultaneously. The advantages and disadvantages of mixed method models were examined before the general research design was delineated. In the second section of the chapter, recruitment strategies, outcomes and issues were addressed. This chapter laid the groundwork for the following analysis chapters.

The first research question regarding the content of representations of male sexuality is addressed through the analyses of men’s magazines (Chapter 5) and of men’s accounts of their sexuality which were produced in interviews (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 addresses the second research question regarding men’s negotiation of representations in the production of their sexual subjectivity by analysing men’s accounts produced in interviews. Finally, the third research question regarding the consequences for men of different ways of understanding male sexuality is addressed through an analysis of survey data (Chapter 8); the analysis of interview data presented in Chapter 7 also addresses this question.
CHAPTER 5. An Analysis of Representations in Australian Men’s Magazines

At the heart of this thesis is the relationship between cultural representations and male sexuality. If men draw on cultural representations to give meaning to their sexuality, it is important that we understand something of the representations available to men in contemporary Australia. What accounts do they provide? What possibilities, for both practice and meaning, do these representations allow, and what do they foreclose? To what extent do these representations overlap, contradict, or reinforce each other? What representations are hegemonic, that is, accounts that have established themselves, and been accepted, as the truth about male sexuality? The analysis presented in this chapter addresses the first research question of interest in this study: what are the different ways heterosexual male sexuality is represented in the accounts of individual men and in popular culture?

Research that has examined representations of masculinity and femininity provides a backdrop to the analysis of representations that follows. A few writers have examined representations of masculinity in a range of cultural material from advertising to films and music (Buchbinder, 1998; Dyer, 1985; Horrocks, 1995, 1997; Nixon, 2001; Rutherford, 1988). A great deal of recent work examining representations of men has been concerned with explorations of ‘new lad’ and ‘new man’ (for example Benwell, 2004, 2003; Gill, 2003; Nixon, 2001; Rutherford, 1988). Rosalind Gill’s (2003) fascinating genealogy of these British representations of masculinity and the “different influences and determinations that produced the discourses” about them, demonstrates the localised nature of representations. The
analysis of magazines is a particularly rich source of representations analysis, though it has tended to focus more generally on masculinity, rather than on sexuality (cf T. Edwards, 1997; Gauntlett, 2002; Gill, 2003; P. A. Jackson et al., 2001; Stevenson, Jackson, & Brooks, 2000). A notable exception to this is a comparison of discourses around sex in magazines aimed at teen girls and men’s magazines read by boys - there are no magazines aimed specifically at the teen boy market - which examined representations of agency and sexual practices (Ticknell et al., 2003). Associated writing on representations of femininity are important theoretical precursors to this research (Hermes, 1995; McRobbie, 1991b, 1991c, 1994; Ussher, 1997b).

The analysis presented in this chapter builds on work examining representations of sexuality in popular culture, some of which was discussed in Chapter 3. A number of writers have examined representations of youth sexuality in popular culture. Good examples of this work include Ashcraft’s (2003) analysis of alternative representations of teenage sexuality in the teen movie American Pie (see also Ashcraft, 2002), and Whatney’s (1991) analysis of dominant representations of teenage sexuality in the films of John Hughes. The examination of representations of adult sexuality is rarer, with self-help texts being a particular focus of analysis. Examples of this work include Annie Potts’ (1998; 2002) deconstruction of the regulation and normalisation of heterosexual relationships in self-help guru John Gray’s Mars and Venus in The Bedroom (1995), and Mary Crawford’s (2004) subsequent analysis of Gray’s earlier book Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus (1992) and a related ABC television program Men are From Mars, Women Are From Venus, But We Have to Live on Earth (1997) (see also Boynton, 2003). Perhaps the richest body of work on representations of adult sexuality is the analysis of representations in pornography (Dyer, 1985; Horrocks, 1995; Kuhn, 1985; McClintock, 1992; Moye, 1985; Segal & McIntosh, 1992; Ussher, 1997b; Williams, 1992). This work will be briefly reviewed as there are parallels with the genre that is the focus of the analysis presented in this chapter. This is particularly true of soft-core pornography or erotica, which is both legally and widely available (it is often sold in newsagents and petrol stations); the content of soft-core pornography is often very similar to that in men’s magazines.
5.1. Research on representations of sexuality in pornography

Much of the literature in this area, notably that on soft-core pornography, has focused on representations of ‘woman’. In her review of soft-core pornography magazines in Britain, Ussher (1997b) noted that most images are of a woman alone; a sexual pose, nude or nearly nude, her pubic hair exposed. She has an inviting ‘come hither’ expression. Kuhn (1985) describes a similar scene, a woman alone enjoying her own body. Often her eyes are averted, as if she is unaware of being looked at. Kuhn argues that the come on or come hither expression acknowledges the presence of the spectator. Even when the woman’s eyes are averted, the tilted head and pouting lips are inviting and acknowledging. In soft-core pornography, the image is often of the whole of a woman’s body. Clothing or poses highlight the important areas: her breasts are thrust forward, or raised by her crossed arms, she is on all fours with her bottom raised, her legs are splayed. She is often depicted masturbating, as if the “sheer sensuality of the moment catches her” (Kuhn, 1985). Elizabeth Cowie describes this as “already excited and desiring, a scene into which the spectator can step” (1992, p. 138). The pose, her expression, the framing all say: I’m available to you. Dyer (1985) describes these scenes as being shot with the male sexual gaze; they make it clear a man is looking and a woman is inviting the look. Further, the context in which these images are produced, the magazine or video, signals the assumed male spectator. Therefore, while male sexuality is rarely explicitly depicted in most soft-core pornography (Horrocks, 1995), it is not absent. The poses, expressions, framing and context all signal a male spectator. He is represented as looking, enjoying her display, ready to enjoy/satisfy her.

What is subtle in soft-core porn - the emphasis on certain body parts, the come hither look, the promise of sexual satisfaction - is made ‘real’ in hard-core porn. The lighting is harsh, the framing harsher (Kipnis, 1996). The woman’s body is no longer whole, instead fragmented graphic close-ups of woman’s genitals or breasts or mouth fill the screen or page. Splayed legs, genitals visible, and often held open; there are a number of different readings of this reoccurring feature of hard-core porn. For Kuhn

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15 A reference to Laura Mulvey’s (1975) work on the male gaze in cinema.
(1985) it is inviting contemplation, as if by intensive examination the mystery of woman will be revealed. Both Ussher (1997b) and Moye (1985) describe it as a reassurance that there is nothing horrifying or frightening inside; a need produced by “men’s sheer terror of female genitals” (Segal, 1990, p. 212). What is represented in pornography is sexual difference (Kuhn, 1985); the repetitive, obsessive and explicit close-ups of specific and isolated parts of the woman’s body, her vagina or breasts, may represent men’s envy (Horrocks, 1995) or indeed simple curiosity.

The penis is centre stage in hard-core pornography, and penetration, of any orifice, a key feature (Ussher, 1997a). These are repeated representations of phallic mastery; there are never any problems with man’s performance, and woman is always ecstatically satisfied. Key to this is the representation of the thrusting penis that is “effortlessly erect, that never fails, and can perform repeated acts of penetration without any fear of impotence or premature ejaculation” (p. 163). One feature of hard-core pornography that has received considerable attention is the cum or money shot, where the man withdraws his penis to ejaculate visibly, often on the women’s breasts or face. Again, a number of readings have been offered. It may represent men’s disgust and hatred of woman. It is proof of man’s satisfaction (Ussher, 1997a, 1997b); and that the woman’s satisfaction is a product of his work/performance (Williams, 1992). McClintock (1992) points out the irony of this action; at the very moment of apparent simultaneous orgasm, he withdraws his penis - surely a failure of the exalted simultaneous orgasm (Braun et al., 2003). McClintock also suggests an interesting alternative reading; it is the woman’s orgasm that is actually desired, but it is unrepresentable so the cum shot serves to signal her orgasm.

The money shot is often the only direct sign of male pleasure depicted in pornography. A number of writers have suggested that in pornography women’s bodies becomes the site of male desire and pleasure (Cowie, 1992; Horrocks, 1995; Moye, 1985). Andy Moye’s analysis of pornographic writing found that man never expressed pleasure or joy, “he is silent as he concentrates on the job” (p. 58) then simply ejaculates. In hard-core pornography it is the woman who writhes, jerks, spasms, bucks, moans, begs and screams out, responding to man’s action or demanding that he act. This can be read as part of a general portrayal of active masculinity and “passive yet responsive” (Ussher, 1997a, p. 162) femininity, and is
similar to soft-core pornography’s depictions of woman alone, already aroused but waiting for man’s participation. Ussher argues that in these depictions the penis stands as the symbol of man’s power and control over woman. Though Moye claims it is the penis, not the man, which is active - throbbing, pulsating, and thrusting - this sets man apart from his penis. Sexuality is not his but resides in his penis. Annie Potts (2000) has explored this notion, though not in pornography, arguing that the penis is discursively constructed as being separate to man, having a consciousness of its own. These representations then construct man at the mercy of his sexually driven penis.

Some of the work described above has been criticised for not reflecting the diversity in pornography (McClintock, 1992), for example a very common representation in hard-core pornography is of men being dominated (Ussher, 1997b) yet this is absent in most analyses which focus on men’s objectification of women. Some early findings, reported from a study currently underway in Australia, have hinted at the sheer diversity of images of “unconventional sexual beauty and sexual pleasure, which goes far beyond the limits of the Playboy ideal” (Albury, 2003).

The representations described here depict a male sexuality that is detached, always in control and objectifying. Man appears to be outside sex, looking on. However, alternative meanings are also available. Many of the writers mentioned above suggest that the representations depicting woman as object and man as phallic master seek to alleviate a fear of woman (Ussher, 1997a). The search for knowledge, the exclusive depiction of the never failing always-hard penis, the always desiring and responsive woman; these suggest an anxious and insecure male sexuality needing reassurance. Other representations can be read as envy: men envious of women’s bodies and of their sexual pleasure, perhaps a desire not to be outside sex. Finally, control and mastery are so central to masculinity that man must not be depicted as out of control, hence the lack of explicit depictions of male desire or of men in the throes of passion.

This brief review of representations of heterosexual male sexuality in pornography raises a number of questions. What are the representations in more mainstream popular culture aimed at heterosexual men? Are they qualitatively different; or do
they simply (re)produce the same knowledges about male sexuality? A post-structuralist framework suggests that the representations in any genre or medium are drawing on culturally available discourses; the same discourses make news stories, court cases, men’s magazines, pornography, advertising for Viagra and Hollywood movies, meaningful. There has been a tendency to wall off some genres, in particular pornography, as a special case, as if the discourses some how only exist within that sphere. This is not to say different discourses are not apparent, but to treat them as mutually exclusive is problematic. A good example of this is the boundary between men’s magazines and soft-core pornography, which is less solid than perhaps would be expected; many of the same images and poses are used.

What follows is an analysis of contemporary representations of heterosexual male sexuality in Australia. The analysis presented below addresses some of the limitations identified in the literature review chapters. It provides the sociocultural context which is implicated in the production of heterosexuality male sexuality, but was absent in the mainstream psychological literature reviewed in Chapter 2. It also supplements the media analysis literature (Chapter 2), where the emphasis was on the frequency of representations and not on content or meaning. Finally, this analysis extends the post-structuralist research on men’s use of cultural resources to give meaning to their sexuality reviewed in Chapter 3, by providing an analysis of the cultural resources that are available to men in contemporary Australia.

5.2. Analysis of representations: Men’s Magazines

There are a number of reasons why men’s magazines were chosen for analysis. The aim of this research study is to examine the relationship between heterosexual men’s sexuality and representations, so it is important to examine representations that are primarily aimed at heterosexual men. The intended audience for men’s magazines is men, indeed 75-80% of the readership of the magazines used in this analysis is male, and so the content is produced with a male audience in mind. Most importantly, it was expected that men’s magazines would be saturated with representations thus likely to be a rich source for analysis. An initial attempt to collect material from a broader range of mainstream media, resulted in a very small sample of relevant data;
this pilot work is described in Appendix B.1. Pornography is an obvious alternative to men’s magazines, but it is limited in that it is designed to be sexually arousing; many of the representations are of transgressive sexuality or practices. Further, pornography does not claim to be representing normal male sexuality, where men’s magazines explicitly position themselves as reflecting the lives of their readers - ordinary men.

Australia is a nation of magazine readers; in 2003 there were over 220 million magazines sold and nearly $974 million spent on magazines; this was more than was spent on going to the cinema, or on the combined purchasing of computer games, videos and DVDs (all statistics quoted are cited by Magazine Publishers of Australia, 2003). According to the Australian Bureau of Circulations there are nine men’s magazines in the top 100 Australian published magazines (as cited by Magazine Publishers of Australia, n.d.-b). Three of these titles are categorised as ‘Men’s Lifestyle’ (FHM, Ralph, Men’s Health), the remaining six are categorised as ‘Men’s Interest’ (Picture, Inside Sport, People, Australian Penthouse, Picture Premium, 100% Home Girls). Men’s Interest appears to be an industry euphemism for what is more usually called soft-core pornography or erotica. It is Men’s Lifestyle magazines, which are the focus of this analysis.

The following analysis focuses on two magazines: FHM and Men’s Health. These magazines are Australian editions of international titles. The local editions, while taking some of their content from other country editions, have a distinctive local character. In a country where it has been suggested 80% of TV content is imported, with two thirds of this American, this is a particular advantage. According to a Roy Morgan Readership poll (as cited by Magazine Publishers of Australia, n.d.-a) over 80% of FHM’s readership is male and under 35 years of age: 50% 14-24 years, 30% 25-34 years, 15% 35-49 years, 5% 50+ years. The same poll reports Men’s Health’s male readership is 75%, with a slightly different age profile to FHM. Men’s Health

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16 This only includes those titles audited by Australian Bureau of Circulation.
17 FHM was selected over Ralph (an exclusively Australian title); while the two titles are very similar in content and readership characteristics, FHM has a higher circulation and has been previously subjected to critical analysis.
18 This is based on recent media reports of the implications of the Free Trade Agreement with America.
readers are older than *FHM*, with only half younger than 35 years: 20% 14-24 years, 35% 25-34 years, 30% 35-49 years, 15% 50+ years.

**The analysis material**

*FHM*

*For Him Magazine (FHM)* is an internationally successful lifestyle magazine with local versions in 22 countries. Three of these are in the Australasian region - Singapore, Malaysia, Australia. In the UK, *FHM* is the best selling lifestyle magazine; outselling all other lifestyle magazines, men’s or women’s (Gauntlett, 2002). In Australia, *FHM* has a circulation of 117,330 (Magazine Publishers of Australia, n.d.-b), and a readership of 3% - this is an estimate based on quarterly surveys, of the proportion of the population who read the magazine (Roy Morgan, 2003).

The content of *FHM* suggests lifestyle rather than erotica, with features on “fashion and grooming, health, sports, motoring, relationships, alcohol, IT, gadgets, games and book, film and music reviews” (John Bastick, Australian editor quoted in *FHM* media kit, n.d.). Indeed, it has often been characterised as a male version of *Cosmopolitan* (Gauntlett, 2002). *FHM* characterise their reader as a man in his glory years: intelligent, professional, mid to late 20s (*FHM* media kit, n.d.). This is slightly different to the image of the lad epitomised by *FHM UK* (Stevenson et al., 2000) suggesting both cultural differences and perhaps a shift in the market since Stevenson et al.’s analysis. Further, *FHM*’s reader is interested in the latest brands and trends, he has a high disposable income, spending his money on fashion, fragrance, grooming products, cars and gadgets (Roy Morgan Readership Survey, January to December 2003 cited by *FHM* media kit, n.d.).

The *FHM* reader is not the self-assured figure of hegemonic masculinity. The magazine pitches itself as providing answers to a reader with many questions and insecurities:
It freely acknowledges men are insecure and have a lot of questions about their bodies (Dana Fields, executive publisher in US quoted by Gauntlett, 2002, p. 157)

On the inside we’re just a seething mass of insecurities (Mike Soutar former editor UK quoted by Gauntlett, 2002, p. 156)

This is reflected in its content; the magazine is full of advice. But *FHM* is careful not to expose the insecurities of its readers, presenting its advice in a matey, friendly manner (Stevenson et al., 2000). The matey tone pervades the magazine. It can be seen in the way the magazine makes fun of its readers, much like friends teasing each other. Often the reader’s sexual abilities are mocked. In one issue, *The letter’s page pie* depicted the issues raised by the letters to the editor: 22% of letters were “readers enquiring what to do with their pee-pee when with a girl” (*FHM* Oct 2002). It is not only through direct reference that the reader is present in the text. There are also a number of reader contributions. There is the usual letters page, a reader’s problem section called *Life support*, reader jokes in *Barroom jokes*, and tales of foolishness in *True stories*. Another regular feature, *What’s wrong with FHM*, is an opportunity for readers to point out what *FHM* got wrong in previous issues. In keeping with the matey tone, the magazine highlights one of these letters as “idiot of the month”.

The jokey, not taking life too seriously feel of *FHM* is reflected in the editorial policy - “if it's not funny, sexy or useful, then it's not in *FHM!*” (John Bastick, Australian editor quoted in *FHM media kit*, n.d.). There are no promises here of accuracy or reality. *FHM* readers are apparently aware of this, with a readership survey finding that only 17% of men’s magazine readers trust what they read in *FHM* ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.). Regardless of how trustworthy the readers see the magazine, there is still plenty of direction provided on how to be a man. This is not just lifestyle advice on fashion, music and cars but covers basic skills like cooking. *FHM* doesn’t ask much of its readers, indeed it often feels like a mate reassuring you that ‘you are ok as you are’. This is different to the relentless encouragements to improve one’s self found in *Men’s Health*. 

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Men’s Health has an Australian circulation of 46,663 (Australian Bureau of Circulations, as cited by Magazine Publishers of Australia, n.d.-b). The magazine has a readership of 1.6% (Roy Morgan, 2003); 80% of their readers do not read any other magazines ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.). Men’s Health readers are older, with the majority aged 25 to 50 (Roy Morgan, 2003), and are most likely to be fulltime employed and have a tertiary education ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.). The magazine characterises its readership as intelligent, educated, knowledgeable and successful ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.). These men are actively looking to improve their lives, and use information provided by Men’s Health and their advertisers to do this. The magazine is full of information, tips and advice; its tag line is “heaps of useful stuff”. Features covering getting in shape, improving your diet, and dealing with stress, tell the reader: we know you’re not perfect, here’s how to be better. The features are often educational, such as a 10-page spread on prostate cancer which included reader stories, diet advice, and guidelines for assessing your risk (Men’s Health Dec 2001).

Contrary to its title, Men’s Health is not limited to health; its features cover body, fitness, losing weight, dieting, sex and relationships. Although 70% of cover stories and features address fitness, diet and physical and mental health, the regular features are more mixed covering health, fitness training, weight loss, adventure travel, sex, relationships, fashion and culture. For example, a regular how-to feature called A Man’s life, offers advice on a range of areas relevant to the modern man: How to eat tricky food (without making a complete fool of yourself) (Men’s Health Sept 2001); How to survive the slammer (Men’s Health Oct 2001); How to win a staring contest (Men’s Health Oct 2001); How to streak in style (Men’s Health Nov 2001). This feature also includes tips sent in by readers, which often makes Men’s Health seem like a domestic bible - how to keep potato chips fresh, how to get wax off the carpet, keep your plumbers glue from drying out, make perfect toast. Gauntlett calls this a “masculine packaging” of the traditional women’s lifestyle magazine (2002, p. 163). Indeed Men’s Health editorial philosophy would not be out of place in a women’s magazine:
We know that balancing a demanding boss, a family, relationships, social life, exercise and deciding what to cook for dinner can be taxing on the brain and our aim is to make it all easier and more worthwhile ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.).

*Men's Health*’s tone is quite different to *FHM*. They make a clear distinction between the magazine/expert and the reader (Stevenson et al., 2000). It is very clear which direction the knowledge flows. The relationship is blurred in *FHM*, where there is a sense that everyone needs a little help. Gauntlett (2002) characterises *Men’s Health* as a trusted health advisor. The readers of *Men’s Health* confirm this. A survey conducted by Newspoll found 63% of men’s magazine readers trusted what they read in *Men’s Health*; this compares with *FHM*’s 17% (Newspoll 2001 Reader Involvement Survey, as cited by "Men's Health media kit," n.d.). The magazine plays heavily on being not just trustworthy but realistic, promising real and useful information. This is reflected in the features and content of the magazine, as well as in its policy on using images of women.

Rather than showing men fantasy pictures of someone they can’t have (and probably don’t want), the focus is on giving them information which will help them build the best sex life they’ve ever had ("Men's Health media kit," n.d.).

**Analytic method**

The representations were analysed using a post-structuralist form of discourse analysis. Much of the theoretical background to this approach was outlined in Chapter 3. To briefly review, in common with all discourse analysis, language is the focus; it both “produces and constrains meaning” (Burman & Parker, 1993, p. 3). The post-structuralist aspect focuses attention on how objects are constructed by discourse (Parker, 1992); what is known about heterosexual male sexuality is constructed “in and through discourse” (Macnaghten, 1993, p. 54). This approach draws on a Foucauldian notion of discourse as a “regulated system of statements” (Henriques et al., 1984, 1998, p. 105). The process of analysis, especially the coding
stages, followed that outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987); this is described below.

The process of coding began by selecting material for analysis. Eight magazines were analysed, four issues of *FHM* Australia - Jun 2002, Aug 2002, Oct 2002, Dec 2002, and four of *Men’s Health* Australia Sept 2001, Oct 2001, Nov 2001, Dec 2001. Firstly, all material concerning sex, sexuality and relationships was identified. Some content was excluded: advertising, editorial, letters to the editor, celebrity interviews with male sports stars or actors, fashion spreads and photo shoots and reviews of film, music, computer games. This left on average 12 pieces per *Men’s Health* issue, ranging in length from short pieces covering a quarter of a page to features running to six content pages. *FHM* was a little more complicated; there were on average 50 pages per issue. However, approximately 30 pages were pictures of women - celebrities, models or actors and female readers - often accompanied by titillating interviews; these are not included in the subsequent analysis. This leaves an average of 15 pages per issue of *FHM*, again some only a few lines, others up to five pages. This left over one hundred short news/health items, features, and regular series like *Ask the sex doc*, *Ask Dave the barman*, *This dating life*, and *Life support/Bionic*. A complete list of the pieces that made up the sample is in Appendix B.2. This selection of relevant material was the first stage in the coding process.

The next stage of coding involved identifying themes; in the current analysis this meant looking for different representations of male sexuality. This was a cyclical process of reading the articles to identify seemingly different representations or accounts and then reviewing the material to determine if these were convincingly distinct; this produced the initial coding frame. Discourse analysis is a lengthy process (Parker & Burman, 1993) and the data set identified here covered over a hundred separate pieces ranging from very short news pieces to several-page features. This is a very large data set, and it became clear during the second coding stage, identifying themes, that there was much repetition. Unlike content analysis, providing a sense of the frequency of the themes is not relevant in discourse analysis. Therefore, a sub-sample, of a quarter of the original material, was used for coding using the framework discussed above.
Potter and Wetherell (1987) recommend coding data into “manageable chunks” (p. 167), which usually entails phrases, sentences or sometimes whole paragraphs. One of the complications encountered during the coding for the current analysis, was that often an entire article was an instance of the discourse or representation. The language, phrases, metaphors, and illustrations used, the format (for example, how-to guide), and the tone (for example, sharing an experience or giving advice), were all separate instances of the discourse. Moreover, often the reference to the article on the magazine cover and in the contents page, the introduction if the article was part of a special feature, and the editorial preamble before the article proper began, were also instances of the same discourse. Together they also contributed to the overall sense of one coherent account of male sexuality in a single article. This is an important element in the patterns of meaning that this analysis is concerned with identifying. Therefore, manageable chunks were typically whole articles. This is not to suggest that there were not other discourses apparent in the article. One article might receive multiple codings, though often one discourse tended to prevail.

Once coding had been completed, the final stage of analysis began. This involved taking a step back to see what the various representations had in common - language, metaphors, structure, and what distinguished them - absences, contradictions. Carla Willig summarises this process of identifying discourses as:

Establish what is talked into existence (for example, the male sexual drive), how this construction positions subjects (for example, as driven by instinct, as unaccountable) and how it refers to (and thus depends upon as well as maintains) other discourses (for example, a discourse of a complementary passive sexuality) (1999, p. 114)

The search for patterns of meaning produced the four discourses, and the representations that draw on them, discussed in the following section.
5.3. Analysis

The analysis presented here is two-fold; it describes four discourses that are evident in the magazines and different representations that draw on these discourses. For example, one discourse identified is the skilful discourse. Representations drawing on this depicted male sexuality being skilful, acquiring skill, failing to display skill, etc. The convention in the presentation of discourse analysis is to provide a “representative set of examples” along with the “detailed interpretation” (J. Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 172). In practice, this usually means using examples from the process of coding. As noted above, however, whole articles were often coded as instances of a discourse, therefore, whole articles are often presented as examples of a discourse, or a representation within a discourse. One advantage of this is that the context of the representation is less prone to be lost. The more conventional form of presentation is sometimes used, that is, single instances from other articles.

A final point: the analysis here is concerned with describing some of the representations of male sexuality in *FHM* and *Men’s Health* and the different readings available, not with how realistic these representations are. The point here is not to determine if *FHM* and *Men’s Health*, and the representations they contain, are a good or a bad thing. These representations should not be seen as reflecting men’s lives or fantasies, nor are the interpretations provided the only reading available.

**A discourse of male sexual skill**

The majority of articles in both magazines drew on a discourse of sexual skill and knowledge, this is the same discourse described in the review of qualitative research on sexuality (Chapter 3). The discourse was signalled through the format, usually a how-to guide, with the identification of a ‘problem’ and then various strategies to address it. Sex was characterised as a man’s responsibility; it was his duty to acquire the appropriate skill and knowledge so he was equipped for sex. Within this discourse, sex was a task driven undertaking for men; man’s demonstration of sexual
skills and expertise resulted in woman’s sexual satisfaction, which was understood as an orgasm.

Male sexuality was constructed as controlled, detached, unproblematic and expert. The discourse of skill and knowledge sits relatively comfortably alongside the male sex drive discourse discussed in Chapter 3: the male sexual drive can be satiated as long as women’s sexual needs are met first. Thus, the male sexual drive needs to be controlled, kept in check, until the woman is sexually satisfied. This contrasts with the traditional notion of male sexuality, exclusively focused on its own sexual pleasure. This was occasionally spelt out in the magazines:

Either our reputation is wrong - getting on, getting off and getting to sleep - or our readers are the best of the bunch. We want to be partners who make sex as pleasing emotionally as it is physically

(Men’s Health passion poll. Men’s Health Sept 2001)

Concentrate on her pleasure first (if she’s not enjoying herself, you won’t either) and on techniques that delay ejaculation

(Some enchanted evening…how to have a one-night stand without making a complete mess of things. Men’s Health Dec 2001)

Within this discourse, women’s sexual desire and pleasure were construed entirely in terms of orgasm. Moreover, intercourse was the ultimate goal, and as will become clear, the support for sexual practices beyond this only extended to their increased likelihood of producing an orgasm - in a woman. Man’s desire for intercourse was never questioned, and his pleasure was construed in terms of the production of pleasure for women - the satisfaction of a job well done.
Male sexuality as the acquisition and performance of skill

Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom - the master craftsman’s guide to sex (Men’s Health Oct 2001)

This first article is the most unambiguous articulation of the sexual skill discourse, presenting a very mechanistic picture of male sexuality. The introduction to the article places the penis at the centre of sex, and makes it clear that successful male sexuality requires learning.

Fortunately men already come equipped with the right equipment. What you need is to learn its many uses, its wide variety of speeds, angles and yes attachments.

As with most examples in this discourse, the format is problem-solution. A list of tasks with the problem identified “Your task” and a solution offered “Your technique”. For the more advanced, a “Master craftsman’s tip” is included. The tasks here include “do it underwater”, “get her pregnant”, “operate heavy machinery under the influence of alcohol”, “perform all night”, “take off with plane sex”, “master the quickie” and “make her orgasm - pronto”. The language depicts sex as performance “keep it hard until your job is done”, “fulfil your mission”, “tonight’s project”, “one more job for her handy-man”.

The article presents sex as a goal oriented undertaking requiring careful management: identify task, apply correct technique, great sex guaranteed. All the tasks centre on intercourse and the goal is orgasm for both. Women’s satisfaction is a central premise in the article, and it is made clear that penetration will not necessarily provide all women with an orgasm. The clitoris gets some discussion - the recommendation being to stimulate her clitoris while having intercourse. There is never any discussion about foreplay, or question that either partner may desire other sexual activities; intercourse is still at the heart of sex in this representation. Men never, ever, lack the desire for sex; they may be physically inhibited, for example by
alcohol, but lack of desire was never an issue. Discussion of men’s pleasure is completely absent.

There is a feature box in the article explaining five mysteries about women’s bodies; it encourages men to find out about their partner’s body but never by discussing it with her. Indeed, men are repeatedly positioned as potential experts where women are not.

Perhaps the only thing more mysterious than a woman’s mind is her body. You’ll probably never really know what’s going on in there but you can get a pretty good idea of what’s going on down there - in fact, maybe even a better one then she has.

The advice is provided for men, and assumes women do not know about their own bodies by repeatedly suggesting men share this new knowledge with their partners.

But a woman with irregular periods may not know when her time is coming - unless you use your superior handyman knowledge to forewarn her.

This is a central aspect of the discourse: men are the expert on sex, women’s pleasure and women’s bodies. There was never any suggestion that men speak to their partners or take their lead from her. Within this discourse, women are firmly positioned as the passive recipients of men’s expertise.

What is interesting about this article is that this skilful male sexuality is positioned as neither idealistic or out of reach of the readers; this is practical advice for ordinary men. While men should be knowledgeable and skilful about sex and women’s bodies, this is something they have to learn. Male sexuality may be driven, in that men always want sex, but it is not always a straightforward natural event. Men sometimes need a little help, and sex requires organisation. Intercourse is the defining activity of sex, but the orgasm imperative applies to women and this necessitates other sexual activities. All of which gives the impression that becoming an expert at sex is something available to all men, acquiring the appropriate skill and
knowledge is only a question of effort. The pressure to improve one’s self was a common theme in *Men’s Health* across a variety of topics.

The prevailing characterisation of woman in this discourse was mysterious, resistant and naïve. Men needed to have skill and knowledge to understand the mystery of woman. This was reflected in titles such as *Like we’re not confused enough* (*Men’s Health* Sept 2001), *What women want* (*Men’s Health* Sept 2001), *Venus attacks! We attempt to explain that enigma called ‘woman’* (*Men’s Health* Sept 2001). It was clear from *Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom* (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001), that women were ignorant of their own bodies and desires. In the regular feature *Ask the sex doc* (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001) the advice to a reader who could not find his girlfriend’s clitoris was, “it could be hiding”. The reader is counselled to take a closer look, and reassured that a hidden clitoris is a condition affecting a quarter of women. The positioning of women as ignorant of their own bodies is reinforced by the comment “your girlfriend may not realise anything is amiss”. There is never any suggestion that the reader speak to his girlfriend. Within the skilful discourse, it is unimaginable that a man would ask a woman about her body or sexual desires. The secret to successful sex is not communication and negotiation; if a sexual relationship is not going well, within this discourse, the problem is a deficiency of male sexual skill.

**Male sexuality as expert**

The construction of male sexuality as detached, calculating and controlled was central to the skilful discourse. Men are required to be experts in sex, be that a Master Craftsman, or Casanova “the world’s greatest lover” (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001). In the next article, it is man the scientist. The scientific language lends an air of truth to the article; the scientific investigation of woman will reveal her secrets. The point of this discovery is to improve man’s skill.

**Sex explained. The sex miracle* (FHM Jun 2002)**

This article was in the science section of *FHM*, and claimed to reveal the secrets of women’s biology. The representation of male sexuality in this piece is again simple and uncomplicated, as men are easily aroused: “rub a book over your lap on the bus”.

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Women however are different: “elusive, labour-intensive orgasm of your lady”. Women need considerable - male - intervention to make them sexual. Men must acquire and utilise sexual skill and knowledge to awaken a woman’s sexual desire and give her pleasure.

The article is positioned as a step-by-step guide to making a woman orgasm. It charts the changes in a woman’s body as she becomes sexually aroused. Each step describes a skill a man bestows - “kissing”, “nuzzling”, “breast play”, “the sex” - and the physiological consequences. The piece is an unsettling mix of exact scientific description: “her temperature rises from a normal 36.5°C to around 37°C”; “the sensitive Meissner’s corpuscles in the uppermost layers of her skin”; “She gets a hormone rush of oxytocin”. And erotic description more at home in a Mills and Boon novel: “you’ll feel the tremulous start of an orgasm”; “her heart is racing, and she’s moaning with delirious joy as her nerve-endings fire pleasure signals in all directions”; “her expression drowsy and dreamy”.

As with most sex described in both *FHM* and *Men’s Health*, intercourse is the ultimate goal. Indeed many of the physiological changes in the woman’s body are described as preparing her body for penetration by the penis: “her tissues are becoming more pliable and welcoming” and “though she can’t feel it, her uterus and cervix have been tilted upward and backward in preparation for receiving your hot portion”.

As in many of the articles, it is made clear that women don’t orgasm with intercourse alone, and this being the key, other activities are required “supplement things with your loving paws”. Ultimately, men are responsible for woman’s pleasure and orgasm. At no point in the article does it suggest asking the woman what she desires or how she feels; the expert knowledge, gained through scientific investigation, is superior and sufficient. Finally, the advice “stay hard, keep up the finger work” reminds the reader that sex is a mission he has taken on, rather than a shared pleasurable experience.

The description of sex is like painting by numbers or an experiment - if you do this then her temperature will rise by x - exact, certain and predictable. The impression
given is that the facts uncovered apply to all women. Indeed, it is a consequence of
the how-to guide that a universal notion of woman is produced. This implies that
woman can be known and is submissive; she has no control of her own. Clearly, this
is problematic, for what if she does not respond in the way described?

In contrast to the cold scientific tone of “sex explained”, there is also wonderment in
much of the description of “the miracle of sex”. The envious tone in the article hints
that the desire to uncover the secrets of woman’s unrestrained sexual pleasure is an
attempt to possess the pleasure that seems absent in this discourse.

*Skilful male sexuality overcoming woman's resistance*

A prevalent representation, especially in *FHM*, was of men acquiring skill to
overcome woman’s resistant sexuality. In this first example from *Men’s Health*, the
representation of male sexuality is more confident and skilful than in the subsequent
articles from *FHM*. In *FHM*, the depiction of skill-to-overcome tends to be much
cruder, often depicting a desperate male sexuality.

*What would Casanova do (Men’s Health Dec 2001)*

In this article, the skill is slightly different to that described previously but the goal
the same. The article presents the 10 principles that guarantee a man will be as
successful as Casanova was. Again, we see the notion that successful male sexuality,
which is characterised here as getting women to consent to sex, is merely a matter of
acquiring the right skills. Each of the ten principles describes an aspect of the
Casanova fable, and then explains how a man can put these into action. For example,
one “Casanova Commandment” involved:

> Considerable time asking questions and listening…this woman was his equal
> and she was made to feel like that when he expressed a genuine interest in her
> opinions.

In practice, the article encourages men to find women fascinating, ask open-ended
questions, and not to see them merely as objects. The principles focus on women’s
sexual enjoyment and pleasure, but there are a number of points where the reader is reminded of the goal:

Indulgence is the removal of a single brick that significantly weakens the whole structure.

Time your gift’s delivery for that critical point in the evening when there remains just one obvious way for her to show her gratitude.

The article informs the reader what a bad boy Casanova was whilst also encouraging him to use his methods. A very contradictory image of Casanova is contained in the text, on the one hand not a sexual predator but a lover of women, interested in their pleasure. On the other, a conman, placing love and play above all else, ultimately using elaborate seduction techniques - his skill - to have sex with women who were usually off limits. Within the article, the goal is clearly to get a woman to allow a man to have sex, yet there is much care about her reputation, making her feel special, treating her with reverence, indulging her, being sensitive to her. Male sexuality is constructed as driven and manipulative, motivated by a drive to have sex. The aim is not to transform this into an honourable caring male sexuality motivated by a desire to satisfy woman, but to acquire the skills and knowledge to successfully perform this role.

*Blow her pants off!* (FHM Oct 2002)

This *FHM* article is written like a military exercise. It starts with “Your mission: with ridiculously low cooking ability, get her roused for love.” The ingredients are “ammo”, and the cost of the ingredients “collateral damage”. The recipe is divided into three courses, “the lure”, “the trap”, and “the killer move”. There are also tips on mood lighting, music, and advice on how to read her body language. The joke here is that men are inept, left to their own devices they would be unable to accomplish a romantic moment, and perhaps even unable to negotiate access to sex.

19 Women who were socially, morally or legally taboo. *Men’s Health* gives a list including nuns, sisters and their mothers, a hunchback, slave girls, noblewomen and his illegitimate daughter.
The language and the analogy of a military operation characterise sexual interaction as a battle, with sex the reward, given up under duress. It was a common theme in *FHM* that men and women were engaged in battle. Women have the power to determine if sex occurs or not, and men must negotiate - or convince, cajole, and manipulate. This requires that men embark on different strategies to get access to sex; this was the premise of many articles in *FHM*. In most of these articles men were *not* depicted as being successful, it was very rare that they got the girl - they just fantasised about it. As was the case in the next article, where men again engaged in extreme tactics to convince women to have sex with them.

*Makin’ bacon: Woo like the beasts* (*FHM* Aug 2002)

This article consisted of an examination of animal mating techniques to determine how they have so much ‘guilt-free’ sex. There is a sense of frustration with the kind of skills depicted in the Casanova piece above:

> What good are opposable thumbs when we’re fumbling around with roses and lukewarm wine - just for the chance of an ungainly Saturday night bunk up?

Eleven techniques, apparently inspired by animals, are described with their “Human Equivalent” and the outcome “The real world” when they were tried in a bar situation. The techniques are ludicrous, often verging on sexual harassment. Only two were mildly successful, both apparently because women felt sorry for the man performing the animal antics. Male sexuality is depicted as desperate and silly, willing to employ any ridiculous measure to convince women to have sex with them but failing dismally.

*The knowledge: Get sex on demand* (*FHM* Jun 2002)

The desperate theme is continued in this article, billed as tips to get an unwilling woman to have sex. The tag line is “Have even the most unreceptive woman ready and willing in 60 seconds!” Male sexuality is constructed as always desiring, never
not in the mood, even when his partner is not. This is man at the mercy of woman’s whims:

But for the woman who’s below par or inextricably angry, getting in the mood can be a far more complex and mysterious journey, involving insistent cajoling, massage and yet another bogus matrimonial pledge and new shoes.

Again, as in many of the articles, the representation of woman is mysterious, complicated and passive, with much intervention required before an interest in - or willingness to allow - sex is generated. This piece makes it clear that skill and knowledge are required because women need to be cajoled and convinced. With some expertise, a man can help a woman “forget that all she wanted was a cuddle”. A range of sexual positions are presented that will persuade a woman to have sex. As with previous articles drawing on this discourse, the article is problem-solution oriented. Six barriers to sex are identified - “she’s exhausted”, “she’s got backache”, “she’s furious with you”, “you’ve done her wrong”, “she’s got a headache” and “she’s on the blob”. For each there is a “problem”, “sex solution”, “what to do” and “why it works”.

In this article, the male sexual imperative is deemed urgent and active. In the face of a woman’s anger, disinterest, discomfort, or even pain, man’s sexual interest is unwavering. However, in the accompanying illustrations, which depict a man and woman having sex, she looks most unimpressed, even angry (see Figure 5.1). This is not the outcome imagined by the discourse: where is the submissive, rapturous, satisfied woman?
The three *FHM* pieces above represent men reduced to ridiculous tactics in a desperate attempt to convince women to have sex. This is a male sexuality lacking the confidence and skill expected by the skilful discourse, rarely successful and often depicted as foolish. Control appears to escape these men, be that control of their...
sexual drive, emotions, sex, or women. These representations were common in FHM but atypical in Men’s Health, perhaps reflecting FHM’s younger and less sexually experienced readers. The Casanova piece, for example, did not give the impression that man could fail to master the skill and so secure sex. The possibility of male sexuality failing within the skilful discourse is discussed in a later section.

Assessment of male sexual skill

The construction of male sexuality as the performance of sexual skill predictably produces a requirement for some measurement of the result. With a woman’s orgasm being the criterion of man’s skill, the evidence of it was usually sufficient:

You only have to look at her to see she’s well and truly serviced - her limbs floppy and relaxed, her expression drowsy and dreamy. (Sex Explained. The sex miracle. FHM Jun 2002)

However, for the less confident there was the need for a more exact approach - a customer service survey. The survey is perhaps analogous to asking a woman ‘did you come’ and suggests an anxiety around successfully meeting the demands of the skilful discourse.

FHM’s one-night stand test (FHM Oct 2002)

This article is billed as a test to give to a one-night stand before she leaves to find out how she rates a man’s sexual prowess. The survey format and the customer service tone invoke the skilful discourse:

It would help me improve my services to womanhood considerably if you were to take five minutes to fill in this brief questionnaire on your experiences at my humble abode.

The question sections are “Seduction”, “Back at my place”, “Sex”, and “This morning”. The Sex section includes:
Please circle the creature that sprung to mind during the session - lithe panther, grunting bear, manic woodpecker, drugged koala, feeding mosquito.

Please circle the best description of my come face - demented clown, crying child, peculiarly serene, noticeably grateful, don’t know kept eyes shut.

Did I say anything embarrassing at the point of orgasm?

Ratings on: my kissing, my fingering technique, cunnilingus, penis size.

There are the usual representations here of male sexuality as active, responsible and initiating. However, there is also considerable concern about performance and how the woman may have judged him, and not just in relation to sexual performance. Questions extend to his apartment, his manner, his bathroom and his relationship potential. The representation of men during sex - demented clown, manic woodpecker - suggests a significant concern at having behaved idiotically; he may not have triumphed. The discourse of skill requires the performance of appropriate skills and knowledge, the production of woman’s orgasm, and for these things to have been carried off convincingly. The one night stand test poses the question - was I convincing? This again positions women as powerful in sexual interactions, for it is women who have the power to determine the successful performance of male sexuality.

Skilful and inept male sexuality

Because the articulation of the skilful discourse was chiefly through how-to articles, there were few representations of skilful and knowledgeable male sexuality in action. One of the rare instances was an interview with a male prostitute in The gigolo (FHM Aug 2002). During the course of the interview, he positions himself within the skilful discourse, describing the serious work-like attitude he takes to his job “it’s like training to swim or run - except with an orgasm”. Further, he is different to other men, whom he positions within the more traditional male sex drive discourse:
From what I hear, guys are just interested in getting on, getting in and getting off. And seduction, foreplay - it’s an area that’s often neglected.

Perhaps more importantly, he never fails at his task:

\[ FHM: \text{Ahoy! Do you give an orgasm guarantee?} \]

\[ \text{Gigolo: A woman not coming has never happened in my time. They all come.} \]

\[ \text{Some take longer than others, but eventually get them.} \]

The gigolo is a perfect, and clearly unrealistic, representation of skilful male sexuality.

The representation of men failing to meet the expectations of the skilful male sexuality was slightly more common - particularly in \textit{FHM}. For example, the \textit{FHM} article \textit{Makin’ bacon: Woo like the beasts} (\textit{FHM Aug 2002}), was a representation of failing male sexuality. Though the undertaking - to adapt animal mating techniques to a bar situation - was clearly ridiculous, which may somewhat undercut the sense that this was a failure. A more unambiguous representation was in the following piece, where the promise of the title contradicts the content of the article.

\textit{Piste talk - master the art of chalet chit-chat and experience a bevy of bunnies in your bunk-bed abode} (\textit{FHM Jun 2002})

This article was a single page, in the middle of which was a collage of images of men with speech bubbles; at the bottom of the page are three women in a spa bath. The speech bubbles reveal the men are worrying about a variety of things:

\[ \text{It’s hot in here. I hope my hair-in-a can doesn’t melt.} \]

\[ \text{Hi, I’m in IT. I also sport preposterously small genitals.} \]

\[ \text{Thank God that bald dude’s here. That increases my chance of a root.} \]
Dear Lord, help me get laid. Dear Lord, help me get laid… (sitting with head in hands)

The women also have speech bubbles. One is complaining about the small talk when all she wanted was “my holes filled in an all-night, debauched sex binge”. Another is impressed by the amount of beer the Swedish men drank. The last is so disappointed by the men she decides to join a women’s cricket team (a coded reference to lesbianism). This is not a representation of super confident men pursuing the ladies; there is no skilful male sexuality on display here. Indeed, in the face of three sexually interested and available women, though still passively waiting, the men appear to be anxious and failing dismally.

An absent representation of male pleasure

One of the starkest absences across both magazines was male pleasure. There were regular references to women’s pleasure, though this was generally understood in terms of orgasm. Only occasional mention was made of ejaculation or male orgasm, and it was rare to find representations of male pleasure and enjoyment. This is arguably a consequence of the dominance of the discourse of skill and knowledge: women’s sexual satisfaction is the focus and so men’s pleasure is silenced. Men sought sex; they were never depicted as directly seeking pleasure or sexual satisfaction. Oral sex was briefly mentioned in The FHM rules: A non-negotiable code to life… (FHM Jun 2002). It was clear that men desired oral sex: “Post-blow job etiquette. A quick kiss on the forehead is a perfectly acceptable statement of your frankly pathetic gratitude”. Yet, men who received oral sex were expected to return the favour (an example of the discourse of reciprocity described by Braun et al., 2003), so even this pleasure was conditional on the requirement to perform.

One reference to men’s sexual pleasure was in the context of an article that drew heavily on the skilful discourse. The good sex work-out (Men’s Health Sept 2001) was a four page feature, discussing men’s fears of a decreasing sexual libido as they age. The message of the article is clear, sex is a performance, and to keep up men need to be fit, especially as they become older. The piece outlines a workout regime to “bolster desire, performance and pleasure”. The references to pleasure were
limited to orgasm: “heightened orgasm”, “rise in the number and intensity of orgasms”, “longer-lasting orgasms” and “pleasurable contractions during orgasm”. The discussion of men’s pleasure takes place in parallel with a discussion about control and timing:

Sex as an athletic event is more akin to synchronised swimming.

Gives you control over your sexual technique…you’ll feel an increased awareness of the impending orgasm, so you’ll have more time to decided to follow through or back off.

Developing the right muscles will allow better control; an increase in pleasure is a fortunate side effect.

The narrative of sex within the discourse of skill concentrates on woman - using skill to convince her to have sex, using skill to bring her sexual pleasure - the culmination of the narrative being her orgasm. It is implied that man’s satisfaction is guaranteed by this narrative, but where/what is it. Is the satisfaction in a job well done? Is an orgasm the sum total of man’s sexual pleasure? There does not appear to be any room for fun and enjoyment in this discourse of work. The absence of representations of male pleasure is conspicuous in the face of so many representations of women’s pleasure. There are plenty of representations in the magazines of sexually ecstatic women, such that we know what she looks like, sounds like, feels, etc. In *FHM’s one-night stand test* (*FHM* Oct 2002) the description of man, at the moment of orgasm, suggested the fear of humiliation: “Please circle the best description of my come face - demented clown, crying child, peculiarly serene, noticeably grateful, don’t know kept eyes shut”. This is not the accomplished masterful and skilful male sexuality demanded by the sexual skill discourse. It is conceivable that the loss of control associated with man’s orgasm makes the depiction of even this limited representation of male sexual pleasure, unacceptable within the skilful discourse (a similar point is made by Kimmel, 1990).
Summary

The discourse of skill constructs male sexuality as in control, detached, and active. Common representations within this discourse were of man the expert, depicted problem-solving women’s mysterious sexuality, or developing skills to produce her sexual satisfaction or overcome her resistant sexuality. The construction of male sexuality as responsible for sex and for women’s sexual pleasure resulted in its positioning as the authority on these issues. The common representation of woman as ignorant of her own body and desires reinforced this. Men do not seek knowledge from women; this position echoes the accounts from young men discussed in Chapter 3.

The discourse made it clear that skilful and knowledgeable male sexuality was available to all men, a matter only of their endeavour and dedication. Once acquired, this expertise could be used on any woman and would produce her sexual satisfaction. Within this discourse, the proof of man’s skill was a woman’s sexual satisfaction, which was reduced to an orgasm. The promise of many of the examples cited above was that by developing the appropriate skills and acquiring the relevant knowledge, a man could make the world of women and sexual relations controllable, and predictable. Heterosexual sexual relations were simple - get skill, perform skill, success.

A central ‘truth’ in most of the representations discussed above was that man was driven to pursue sex. In particular, he was focused on intercourse. Skill was harnessed to gain access to sex, it overcame woman’s resistant sexuality. However, women’s satisfaction had to be attended to first. A common representation in FHM was of sexual relations as a battle: men want sex and women control it. In this battle, men were often reduced to absurd ploys and tactics to access sex. The threat of failing within this discourse was clear - failing to produce an orgasm, prioritising the male sexual drive over women’s pleasure, or failing to get a woman to have sex. The tone of these representations was often one of ridicule. Further, the preoccupation about whether he was skilled enough was also a failure; he should not need reassurance. These representations were most common in FHM. The representation
of successful skilful male sexuality was rare in both magazines, as the emphasis was on the acquisition of skill through, for example, how-to guides.

**A discourse of compromise**

A second discourse identified concerned compromise and constructed male sexuality as subject to regulation, usually in the form of cultural and social expectations and rules. The source of regulation was positioned as society, women and other men. Articles drawing on this discourse were guides to social expectations or were depictions of men negotiating these expectations. Whilst male sexuality was understood in terms of the male sex drive, the enactment of this required a moderation to meet social standards. The discourse envisions a tension between the male sex drive and being in a relationship with a woman; the solution is moderation, negotiation and compromise.

In the skilful discourse, sexual relationships were often characterised as one party having control and the other not. Skilful male sexuality required the submission of woman to man’s expertise. Inept male sexuality was signified by a man unable to master the requisite skills, and woman was characterised as wielding control. Within the compromise in relationships discourse, sexual relations were positioned as less confrontational and more a matter of compromise. The discourse depicted the world of heterosexual relationships as a complicated and potentially risky place for men. Adherence to the rules was the best route to success. It was not always clear what success was however: access to sex, the continuation of a relationship, avoidance of social ridicule, or the soothing of anxieties.

**Regulated male sexuality**

Representations of male sexuality being regulated were often evident in the regular Men’s Health feature **Ask Dave the barman**. This is essentially a problem page where readers write in for advice on “women, sex and other stuff that screws up men’s lives”. The title, blokey tone and humorous content are incongruous in Men’s Health. The questions are always about relationships - commitment, infidelity, relationships
with younger women. In one letter (*Men’s Health* Nov 2001), a man describes visiting a brothel while away on business, he now thinks his wife is having an affair and wants to confront her but his friend thinks he’s being hypocritical. This is Dave’s response:

> Often travel interstate for business? Visited a brothel? Man, your marriage was in trouble long before your wife even laid eyes on this bloke - if there was a ‘bloke’ at all. I reckon that, instead of wasting your energy debating if you’re a hypocrite, you should start putting some effort into your relationship because if you’re not willing to give your wife the attention she deserves, I’m sure someone else would be more than happy to take your place.

In another letter (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001), a reader says he and his wife used to go trekking but since the birth of their child his wife won’t trek. Now he finds himself attracted to young women he meets trekking. The response from Dave:

> I can’t speak from personal experience, but if I’d squeezed a three kilo human being out of my nether regions, I probably wouldn’t be much in the mood for a countryside jaunt either. Anyway, what are you doing traipsing about with pretty young mountain girls when you should be at home helping raise your son and heir?

Dave’s responses are reproachful, not just for the lack of empathy with a partner or hypocrisy but also for selfishly neglecting man’s responsibilities and prioritising his sexual needs. Here humour conveys the message that a more moderate version of male sexuality is required in relationships. Male sexuality in relationship should be responsible, reasonable, mature, and compromising, rather than sexually driven, goal oriented, and selfish.

The problem pages and responses in *FHM*, though still drawing on the notion of male sexuality needing to be moderated when in relation, were different in tone to *Men’s Health*. The section *Life support* (later called *Bionic*) contained problem letters from readers and short items on health and fitness. As in *Men’s Health*, a different approach to the rest of the magazine is employed - in *FHM*, the reader
problems are dealt with in a very straightforward manner. The absence in this section, of the humour in which marks the rest of the magazine, results in an unambiguous and clear message. This is a similar effect to Dave the Barman’s reproachful and directive tone. In one letter (FHM June 2002), a reader is having relationship problems because his girlfriend finds his penis too big. He wonders if he should leave her, positioning intercourse as fundamental to a relationship: “Is there anyway we can still have satisfying sex despite this […] Is it possible that I just need a girl who’s a ‘better fit’, so to speak.”

The doctor suggests a range of solutions that keep the readers’ desire for intercourse as central, before introducing the notion that intercourse may not be imperative for satisfying sex: “Try other things besides vaginal sex. That could feel good for both of you”. The doctor suggests that the relationship should be the imperative rather than intercourse: “Consider these possibilities instead of focusing on a new, larger partner”.

As with Dave the Barman, but with a more supportive and moderated approach, FHM makes it clear to the reader that male sexuality in a relationship requires compromise and concession. It is interesting that in the example given here, the concession is to the fundamental position of intercourse, which the male sex drive discourse constructs as the goal of male sexual desire.

Establishing the expectations

In this next article, male sexuality is more explicitly positioned as subject to social expectations, and humour is used to complain about these expectations. However, the regulation of sexuality is simultaneously positioned as both desirable and ultimately advantageous; compromise ultimately guarantees men get what they want.

The FHM rules: A non-negotiable code to life… (FHM Jun 2002)

This 5-page feature classifies the rules of manhood into several sections, drawing on legal language to describe them: “Meeting of New Women Act”, “The Long-Term Relationship Accord”, “Precepts on Social Engagements”, “The Male Charter” and
“10 Commandments of Man”. The use of legal language such as “inadmissible”, “legally speaking”, “legal owner”, ”both parties” and the “non-negotiation” in the article title, makes it clear that these rules are not to be taken lightly. They are by no means optional.

This article characterises sexual relationships as a matter of exchange, a system that has rules to ensure fair costs and rewards to both parties (another an example of the discourse of reciprocity, Braun et al., 2003). Concepts like “barter”, “ratio”, “banking”, “financial parity”, “exchange”, evoke an economic system, which is reinforced by precise mathematical concepts like “scale”, “correlation”, “ratio”, “equation”. The “Meeting of New Women Act” includes a guide to the ratio of drinks to passion: a beer is worth a kiss, dinner worth oral sex, etc. (see Figure 5.2). The accompanying text makes it clear that sex is never free. Men offer things to women and women offer sex: “Cynical seductees might like to think of it as a form of legal, socially acceptable prostitution - albeit one with a beer-based barter system”.

Figure 5.2. The FHM rules (FHM Jun 2002)
The representation of male sexuality is a familiar one, men want sex and women control it. Within this discourse however, the male sex drive does not have free rein, it must be toned down. Whilst the discourse constructs male sexuality as constrained by social rules, the rules also set out men’s rights. Woman’s body was the subject of many of these ‘rights’.

Ogling, fondling, or even mentioning her breasts. While strictly out of bounds on first meeting…its open season on those puppies from the first time she takes off her bra in front of you. The carnal equivalent of signing a big, pink, wobbly release form, if you will.

Any woman wearing a Wonderbra or low-cut top immediately reduces by half her right to complain about having her breasts gawked at. Put implants into the equation, and moaning potential decreases by another half again.

This rights and responsibilities perspective sets out what women expect of men and what men can reasonably expect of women. It is never articulated what the consequences of violating the rules may be, what happens if men fail to meet women’s expectations (and vice versa); nor is the possibility ever raised that someone might ‘take’ something they were not ‘entitled’ to. However, men’s adherence to the rules is constructed as motivated by a desire to keep women happy, avoid relationship tension, or ensure continued access to sex. As with any system, people are want to find a way of avoiding their responsibilities.

Oral sex. The agreement that The Giving of Head will be reciprocated is unspoken […] however, due to the marked difference in completion times of cunnilingus and blow jobs, lengthy periods of the former can result in the banking - often for occasions far in the future - of the latter.

The expectations depicted are largely unspoken, which is why FHM has to reveal them. This tacitness suggests men can have their needs met without needing to articulate them. For example, giving oral sex creates an imbalance that needs to be addressed, thus oral sex is requested without having to be explicitly asked for. The articulation of a universal system makes relationships with women seem predicable
and perhaps less threatening. However, in advocating that men rely on this system of tacit rules and expectations, the possibility of open communication about sex and desire is ruled out.

**Negotiation**

Within the discourse of compromise, male sexuality becomes a performance that requires understanding the expectations of women and society, and some regulation of the male sex drive. The articles above suggested this is a simple matter of working out the rules and following them. However, this next example characterises the navigation of social expectations, and the moderation of the male sex drive, as difficult, anxiety provoking and not always successful.

*This dating life* is a regular feature, and quite unlike most other *Men’s Health* content. It is not a how-to guide, is written in the first person, and is written as if a record of the lived experience of one man. The writer is positioned as a man negotiating life, thus blurring the boundary between expert and reader usually maintained in *Men’s Health*. This is not to say he doesn’t stand slightly above the reader. He appears to have a lot of dating experience, and names a number of women in his articles. The articles all deal with some tension around relationships, rarely are they simply about sex. The tone is honest, confessional, and seeking reassurance that he is not alone in his experience. Each month he writes about his experience of dating, an evocation of the column written by Carrie the main character in the American TV series *Sex in the city*. His dating struggles are always around managing the expectations of women and society and his desires - desires which are always understood within the male sex drive discourse.

In one instalment *The young and winding road* (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001) the author talks about the internal battle he experiences on dating a much younger woman; though we are informed the woman is 22, no reference is made to the writer’s age. The discourse of regulation requires he monitor himself, to check he is not transgressing social conventions - driven male sexuality does not have free rein.
‘I’m 22’ she replied. The generals convened around the long conference table in my brain. ‘Defensible,’ declared one, after a short interval.

The very thing that excites him, her youth, also causes him considerable anxiety. He jokes about her age “bring id” and “Do you remember...Elvis dying”, and repeatedly places himself in the position of her father “giving her knee a fatherly squeeze”. As soon as he sexualises her, “I studied the exposed satin string on her hip. I gazed at her mouth” the threat of transgression and therefore punishment appears - their car is pulled over by the police. The writer misunderstands the accusation made by the police officer, who suspects he has been drinking: “‘You crossed the line,’ he said sternly. ‘ I didn’t!’” I shot back, glancing at Amy”. He fears punishment for his transgression: “Surely the law didn’t intend to punish me this cruelly?”

**Consequences of transgression**

The admonishing tone of *Dave the barman*, the legal language in *The FHM rules* and the reference to the police and military in the last example, all depict a male sexuality that is being regulated. In all examples, it was the expression of the male sexual drive that was being moderated. There is the threat of punishment here, but it is never clear what the consequences are for men who violate the expectations and conventions of regulated male sexuality. The following article applies the sanctions that transgression gives rise to.

*Dress Wayne Carey* (*FHM* Jun 2002).

Around the time of the article Wayne Carey (captain of an Australian Rules football team), was embroiled in a sex scandal. A married man, he was caught having sex with the wife of his vice-captain (and best friend). The outrage following this incident was notable for the sense of disappointment many men expressed, not only had he cheated on his wife but he also cheated on his team. Wayne Carey’s transgression was two-fold. No matter how driven male sexuality may be it is not acceptable to be disloyal to the team or your mates. Some women are off-limits, namely the wife of a mate. Mateship is a highly valued quality of the Australian character, suggesting that the bond between men should be stronger than a man’s
drive for sex. Not only did he ‘let down a mate’ however, by not ‘doing the right thing’ he failed to be a Good Bloke.

The article successfully humiliates a previously admired sports hero by demasculinising him in a number of ways. Readers are encouraged to cut out a figure, with clothing, faces and accessories to dress him like a children’s paper doll (See Figure 5.3). There are a number of different images available - a tutu for “special occasions”, an open neck shirt for “sex tourist”. There are two gay images, a pair of leather chaps for “violent man love” and other leather clothing “to go to Sydney” (a coded reference to the gay capital of Australia ). One of the accessories is a marriage certificate, and printed on it is “MARRIAGE…till death do us part…honour, respect and obey…solemnly swear before God and the AFL tribunal…” . The accompanying text “Footy contracts? Big money sponsorships? Not worth the paper they are printed on” further blurs the line between his disloyalty to wife, team, mates. The depiction of a number of sexualities that contravene normal social conventions - adulators, homosexuals and paedophiles - makes the gravity of his transgression clear.

Male sexuality may be driven but it is subject to sanction and social expectations. Interestingly this is not positioned by *FHM* as unfair or excessive. It is the magazine, and by their invitation the readers, who are castigating Wayne Carey for not controlling his sexuality. This is in stark contrast to the representation reported by Stevenson et al., in their analysis of *FHM* UK: “the modern man should be able to act in any way he pleases, free of feelings of guilt, depression, anxiety, doubt or ethical complexity” (2000, p. 13). Of course, it is possible that Wayne Carey would not have come in for such punishment if he had not cheated on his team/mates. However, the castigation of the readers in the *Ask Dave the barman* pieces in *FHM* suggests some rebuke for cheating on his wife would have been reasonably expected.
Dress Wayne Carey!

He's everybody's favourite fornicator - now you too can get down with Wayne with just a scalpel and a Clag pot...

**Helmet:** Rather than up-ending his wife, make a mate chortle with ye olde helmet-polishing gag.

**Gimp mask:** Ideal mogggin attire when anonymity is required at a friend's barbecues.

**Crowns:** Spend time polishing the family jewels after your hands are too hot.

**Novelty mask:** Tickle her tickling list bags with this novelty mustachehead set.

**Jersey:** Suddenly found your Saturday free? Buff the car to a Simon-Benton shine with this champions-inspired number.

**Leather wear:** Can't get a run in Melbourne! Rejected by the Dallas Cowboys! Go west to Sydney, young man.

**Sex tourist:** Bald baps blemishing with man-milk, yet can't get a roof? Why not chain the phone on an O's lose junkie?

**Marriage certificate:** Forty contacts? Big money sponsorships? Not worth the paper they're printed on.

**Chaps:** Whether the rodeo's in town or it's indistinct maul, let your cestanets click in this breezy posing.

**Karma sutra:** Recipes from the Punjab to "hustle" her heart.

**Sex toy:** Coach Pagan: best beware when it comes to taking the right kitchen home after training.

Figure 5.3. *Dress Wayne Carey (FHM Jun 2002)*
Resistance

The acceptance of the regulation of male sexuality, within this discourse of compromise, was not always absolute. In FHM, there were sporadic representations of male sexuality needing to take refuge from the expectations and associated pressures and conflicts, produced by the discourse of compromise. Two very similar articles in FHM, that were ostensibly about being lazy, drew on the notion that men were subject to social expectations which could become overwhelming.

*The ultimate man-den (FHM Sept 2002)*

This piece laments the expectations and responsibilities modern man is subject to.

Modern man is constantly pulled and pushed between his many responsibilities. Work, family, mates, lady - there is not time for him to take a load off on his lonesome.

It refers to the past where apparently men were in touch with nature and the seasons, where being a man wasn’t simply about work (this is reminiscent of the mythopoetic movement personified by men like Robert Bly and James Hillman (Flood, 1991)). Included in the tasks overwhelming men were: “attempt sex, apologise to girlfriend”. The notion that men would be required to apologise to their sexual partner if sex was a failure, is intelligible within the skilful discourse where man is responsible for woman’s pleasure.

The article describes a fantasy man-den with all the modern technology that can make sloth a way of life. Importantly, man is alone. This is an interesting representation of men overwhelmed by the pressures of a complex social world, retreating to a sanctuary where all pressures are removed but all their needs are met. In the ‘man-den’ sexual relations with a woman is replaced by a “Christy Canyon Realistic Vagina”, which is attached to the couch. No skill required, and the male sexual drive is given free rein. Male sexuality is reduced to the penis and a physical need - fundamentally, male sexuality is not social. This constructs male sexuality
uninterested in warmth, connection, emotion or human touch. Of course, there is also no danger of disappointment, rejection or humiliation.

In a previous issue, an article called *The FHM biosphere - batten down the hatches* (*FHM* Aug 2002) depicted a very similar fantasy - in this it is not technology but rats that fulfil all of man’s needs. Beyond powering the TV to watch erotic movies, sex appears absent from this refuge fantasy. However, the suggestion that semen is a nutritious protein snack, “the average spurt contains only 15 calories”, again means masturbation is the mode of sexual satisfaction. In both articles, what appears to be avoided is any requirement to interact with people, and this extends to sex. It is interesting that both pieces used the phrase “batten down the hatches” which evokes a image of men under attack. The phrases “man-haven”, “man-cave”, “man-den” make it clear that what is being fantasised here is a refuge from woman. These sanctuaries parallel the cave described by John Gray in *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1995), and the iconic shed needed by “All Australian boys” (“The Shed”, an Australian folk song by Williamson, 1986).

Both of these pieces are drawing on the compromise discourse, by articulating a desire to resist the expectations of this discourse. The only escape however, appears to be by constructing the fundamental truth of male sexuality as a drive for sexual relief and not the biological/reproductive drive to have sex with women as articulated by the male sex drive discourse. The notion that men’s basic sexual need was most simply met though masturbation was present in other *FHM* articles. In an interview piece with a male prostitute *The gigolo* (*FHM* Aug 2002), the magazine appears obsessed with masturbation. The gigolo describes having sex every day, how his clients like to perform oral sex on him, and goes into considerable detail about the satisfaction he receives. Yet, *FHM* is baffled that he doesn’t masturbate “You should treat yourself to a good wank…”.

*Summary*

The compromise discourse positions male sexuality as a drive that needs to be moderated in social contexts, especially within a relationship. Regulation was in the form of conventions and social expectations, which needed to be communicated to
men. In both magazines, this was done through the responses to reader’s letters and how-to guides like the *The FHM rules*. It was clear from these representations that the conventions were often tacit and complicated. Men needed guidance or they may be caught out. Men and women discussing the expectations they may have of each other was not a feature of the representations in this discourse. The system that governs sexual relations appeared to progress on the basis of rights and responsibilities, where neither partner had to verbalise their needs or desires.

The heterosexual sexual relations constructed within this discourse were far less confrontational than within the skilful discourse. There was also a sense that men and women were on an equal footing, both being subject to conventions and expectations, these tended to be in line with dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. However, the notion that guidance was required, and the account in *This dating life* indicated that sexual relations were not simple, but a matter of complex negotiation and compromise. Men had not only to negotiate competing social conventions and women’s expectations, which may be difficult, but also their own sexual desires. Among the conventions explicated in the articles above were those produced by the skilful discourse - attend to women’s sexual needs, do not prioritise man’s sexual drive - as well as those relating to masculinity more broadly, for example being a husband or father.

It was often implicit that contravening the social conventions or women’s expectations had consequences. The consequences were rarely made explicit, though the reproachful responses of *Dave the barman* suggested the shame of failing to meet the expectations might be sufficient. In one example cited, a man who transgressed social conventions was punished by having both his heterosexuality and masculinity undermined by being grouped with other sexual transgressors.

The vital element of the compromise discourse was the control of the male sexual drive. Social male sexuality required the male sex drive be curbed. The only escape was to position male sexual drive as oriented to release, rather than in the more dominant reproductive terms of the male sex drive discourse.
A discourse of salvation and deficiency

There was an alternative representation of men in relationships, though far less common than the compromise discourse. The discourse of salvation construed relationships as offering men escape from the excesses and potentially detrimental effects of male sexuality. A relationship, usually marriage, was construed as a healthy, desirable and safe context for male sexuality. This is an interesting discourse because it again accommodates the male sex drive, but in a very different manner to the previous two discourses. Further, it undermines the notion of women in control of sex. Two articles from *FHM* and *Men’s Health* drew on this discourse: *Wedded bliss* (*FHM* Sept 2002) and *Have you met your match? A Men’s Health guide to a lifetime of sex - with commitment* (*Men’s Health* Sept 2001).

A key feature of the articulation of this discourse was its positioning as a reflection of real life. At a number of points in both pieces, readers are reminded about the difference between real life and the fantasy of male sexuality: “This is your life we’re talking about” (*Men’s Health*) and “This simply does not happen in real life” (*FHM*). There is a sense then, in both articles, that ultimately the normal conventions and motivations of ‘fantasy’ male sexuality are useless:

> Almost all women are attractive enough to marry. Not many are hot enough to be your date at the Golden Globes, but marriage isn’t a beauty pageant. *Men’s Health*

By referring to real life, both articles position men who avoid marriage, or do not see its benefits, as having been fooled by the fantasy of single male sexuality. This is reinforced by both pieces being positioned as the opinions of real men rather than experts. The *Men’s Health* piece was written as a personal testimonial “I haven’t consulted any ‘experts’ or marriage counsellors. Instead I’ve consulted my memories of 28 years, two children, 10,000 laughs and a handful of dark nights.” The *FHM* piece was an attempt to undermine the findings of a scientific study “*FHM*’s decided to take on these boffins, to debunk their anti-matrimony rhetoric…”.
**Single male sexuality’s use-by-date**

*Wedded bliss (FHM Sept 2002)*

An article written in response to an American survey that found modern men don’t want to get married. *FHM* takes the 10 reasons presented by the survey and decides whether they really mean marriage is not a good thing for men. The reasons include, men no longer need to get married, men fear marriage will require too many compromises and changes, and men want to own a house before they get a wife. In contrast, the magazine positions marriage as a good idea.

The salvation discourse is evident in two reasons that are challenged by *FHM*, on the basis of the reality of single life. Firstly, “men can get sex without marriage”. *FHM* acknowledges that whilst men would like to “slay a new beauty on a weekly, if not nightly basis” most men are not successful at this, nor are the women they desire interested in them. If men have not received the message yet, *FHM* continues with a second reason:

They say: ‘men want to enjoy single life for as long as possible’

We say: is the single life all its cracked-up-to-be? Why is it your ‘committed bachelor’ mates never seem to pull roots\(^{20}\) and all own huge pornography collections? Why is it these ‘happy’ singles can go an entire year without ‘giving the ferret’ a run? More so, why are these guys the first to turn-in their bachelor status whenever they meet a woman stupid enough to be suckerd in by their spinach risotto and nasty chardonnay? It’s because the single-life is too often a sad, lonely masturbatory one. Yet, the worst of all is the commitment-phobic man who dumps his dream women so he can continue to play the field. And then moans about her for years! Idiot!

A relationship - specifically marriage - represents salvation. Left loose for too long male sexuality goes bad: single male sexuality can become sad, lonely, pathetic,

\(^{20}\) ‘root’ is Australian slang for sex.
regretful and desperate. The representation subtly implies that with marriage, male sexuality will be none of these things, which is perhaps not so far from the fairy tale promise ...and they lived happily ever after. At the end of the article, FHM concludes that marriage is “imminent for all but the most militant of you...90% of men marry at some stage in their lives, so embrace the facts and get thee to a church”. The use of the term “militant” is interesting as it clearly signals defiance. Rather than a valiant effort to escape social convention, however it is positioned as unreasonable by the “90% of men” reference, and the earlier negative labelling of men who dump their dream woman as “idiots” and “commitment-phobic”.

Stevenson et al. (2000) argued that the articles in FHM UK and similar men’s magazines “offer an unproblematic view of freedom and independence without the connected need for security and belonging” (p. 376). The article described above gives an explicitly negative representation of a disconnected, uncommitted, male sexuality. Thus while the representations of male sexuality in FHM are overwhelmingly a celebration of a young single male sexuality this is not presented as permanent, marriage is depicted as a certainty, an inevitability, in most men’s lives.21

**Single male sexuality as deficient**

An article in a 40-page special feature The Men’s Health guide to women also drew on a discourse of salvation. Where the FHM piece warned about single male sexuality’s use-by-date, this next article alerted men to the deficiencies of male sexuality.

*Have you met your match? A Men’s Health guide to a lifetime of sex - with commitment (Men’s Health Sept 2001)*

The lead into the article describes it as a guide to a lifetime of sex with commitment, the key being to “choose the right wife and your future will be filled with unlimited

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21 In fact, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that on 1997-1999 marriage rates 29% of men will never marry, an increase from 21% in the period 1987-1989. Marriage rates have been declining, with 2001 recording the lowest rate of registered marriages in the past 20 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002b).
sex, laughs and companionship”. As with FHM, there is the reminder that there is an increased likelihood of sex in a relationship. Moreover sex isn’t just good in and of itself, scientific studies are cited that prove “committed men get more and live longer”. However, in the body of the article, there was almost no mention of sex, and it was not about women. This feature was about men, why they need a relationship, and how to pick a wife that will best meet a man’s needs. It resonated on many levels with the Wedded bliss piece in FHM, except in how explicit it was about men’s emotional needs. The piece opens by questioning the relevance of John Gray’s (1995) *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* thesis which focuses on the differences between men and women:

If you believe the sceptics, men and women are from different planets. Not in our universe, they aren’t. Yeah sure, we need sex to feel close and they need closeness to feel like sex. So what? The bottom line is that we’re still both Earthbound and looking for a friend.

Much of the subsequent content however reinscribes gender differences. The result is to construct men and women motivated by the same needs, but possessing different, and intrinsic, characteristics.

The article suggests that the secret to a great relationship is to find a perfect wife. However, beauty, brains and common interests are not the crucial criteria:

You know that idealised, hourglass, Catherine Zeta-Jones image of beauty with which the sexist patriarchal power structure has tried to diminish women? Well, its bad news for women, but its even worse for men.

The use of this pseudo-feminist discourse is interesting, if not a little incongruous as it begs the question - who exactly is benefiting from the patriarchal power structure. Nevertheless, the message is that men have fallen for a lie, their own: “we have swallowed our own sales pitch”. The magazine describes the perfect wife as tender, loyal, financially capable, good at intimacy, and enthusiastic but calm. She should also respect sport, stay in touch with you, have a low pleasure threshold, and challenge you. An onerous demand for one woman! Many of these desirable qualities
are positioned as areas where men are lacking or are aspects of male sexuality that may be detrimental to them. A relationship will provide the remedy to the dangers. Unsurprisingly, the areas where men are most at risk are emotion and intimacy related:

Your wife is going to be your link to the outside world.

The truth is that a lot of us are still cowboys - almost alone on the range.

Sure, your plan is that, mostly, you’ll take care of her. But at some point, you’re going to need a little consolation.

The warning here is that autonomous, independent, impenetrable male sexuality can easily become isolated, disconnected and lonely. These male qualities are fixed, there is no discussion of the possibility of men being different. The only option is a relationship. Men need more than a beautiful sexy woman, they need someone to save them.

**Summary**

The salvation discourse constructs male sexuality as inherently excessive and detrimental to men. Without the escape provided by a relationship, men’s sex drive and the fantasy of the single life will leave them sad, lonely, sexually obsessed, and disconnected from family and friends. The discourse draws on the male sex drive discourse by acknowledging the desire for sex and the promise of more sex that a relationship might hold. However, it negatively characterises this sexuality by locating men’s incentive for being in a relationship as based on a deficit. The possibility that a desire for intimacy or connection could be part of male sexuality is precluded by this discourse.

The characterisation of the single life as a fantasy - not real life, merely a sales pitch - exposes men who resist marriage to charges of having been hoodwinked. The desires produced by this fantasy - wanting to have a lot of sex with a lot of women - is not challenged. Rather, it is the possibility that this can be a satisfying reality for
most men that is questioned. It is notable that it was marriage that was the source of salvation, a committed relationship just wouldn’t do. One consequence of this discourse is that there was no space allowed for the potential difficulties of being in a relationship. Indeed, the reference to the perfect wife and the implicit happily-ever-after promise in both articles, suggests that the fantasy of the single life was merely replaced by the fantasy of married life.

**A discourse of driven male sexuality**

The male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1984, 1984, 1998) was ubiquitous in most articles. I have flagged this discourse in the analysis above, where it is apparent, but a few representations deserve separate analysis. Central to this discourse is the notion that men are driven to have sex with women, and that this drive is natural and normal, a biological necessity. The biological and reproductive explanation means that intercourse is privileged and becomes the goal of heterosexual sex (Gavey et al., 1999). This privileging of intercourse was a feature in all representations discussed above, especially those drawing on the skilful discourse; it was unquestionably the goal. For example, in *Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom - the master craftsman’s guide to sex* (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001), all the tasks centre on intercourse, the instructions for each concern penetration:

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Have her lie on her back. Insert tab A into slot B.

Get on top and once you enter her.

Spread her legs…then enter her gently from behind.
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This representation depicts man as active, responsible for the practice of sex, the culmination of which is the male orgasm (Bogart et al., 2000), though this was rarely explicit in the representations discussed above.

Although a crucial feature of most representations, this discourse was transformed or accommodated by the three discourses described above. The compromise and skilful
discourses both constructed male sexuality as having a driven essence but men’s behaviour, the expression of this drive, was socially constrained. In the skilful discourse, the male sex drive had to be controlled to allow the accomplishment of a key requirement: women’s sexual satisfaction. There was no guarantee men would perform successfully - as might be expected by an account solely drawing on biologically determined sexuality. The compromise discourse required the curbing of the male sex drive to meet social convention and women’s expectations. The salvation discourse, on the other hand did not require the constraint of this drive. However, the uncontrollable nature of the male sexual drive posed a danger to men. Thus, an important aspect of the male sex drive - its driven uncontrollable quality (Hollway, 1984) - was central to the way this discourse was transformed by other discourses of male sexuality. In spite of this, the male sexual drive discourse was never directly challenged. It is possible that its hegemonic status means it cannot be. The only representations that appeared to disrupt the male sex drive was the resistance to the compromise discourse. In the two examples from FHM of men retreating from the social world to a man-den or biosphere, the sexual instinct was not reproductive. The need that men had, along with sustenance, warmth, air and water, was sexual relief; masturbation, erotic movies and sex toys were sufficient to meet this need.

Male sexuality always desiring and easily aroused

A representation ubiquitous in both magazines and crucial to the skilful discourse was of men easily and unproblematically aroused. They always desired sexual contact, they were merely waiting for the signal and they would be aroused. In a number of articles, it was made clear how easily men became aroused; these representations always drew a comparison with women whose sexuality was problematic, mysterious and required considerable intervention.

It’s a well-known fact that, however tired or ill they may be, men can mentally prepare themselves for the sexual act with two simple words - ‘she’s naked’. But for the woman… (The knowledge: Get sex on demand. FHM Jun 2002)
The female orgasm is nothing like its male counterpart. You could rub a book over your lap on the bus to work and reach a giddy climax. While this would be messy, it might still be satisfying - and miles away from the elusive, labour-intensive orgasm of your lady (Sex explained. The sex miracle. FHM Jun 2002)

'And as particularly emotional beings - women need to be psychologically and emotionally prepared for sex,’ reveals Suzie Hayman, a sex counsellor and author of Sex Pleasures from Around the World […] ‘Men on the other hand, can be more easily aroused by physical touch alone’ (What’s she really thinking about in bed. Men’s Health Nov 2001)

Unlike women, who are positioned as needing considerable skilful intervention, men are positioned as never needing to expend energy or thought to awaken their sexual desire. The only reference to the possibility that man’s sexual desire may be vulnerable was The good sex work-out (Men’s Health Sept 2001). This feature assured men that a fitness regime would prevent the flagging libidos feared by aging men. Indeed, “your physical performance can be maintained - even improved”. Problems with sexual desire only apply to aging men, and this is because they get out of shape. The notion that sexual difficulties may be the result of a lack of fitness was a common theme is the few representations of male sexual difficulties. In The gigolo (FHM Aug 2002), there was a single reference to performance issues:

Regular sex helps improve stamina and premature ejaculation problems…

The reference to stamina suggests that fitness can prevent sexual problems. The same message about the link between fitness and sexual performance was made in The good sex work-out (Men’s Health Sept 2001):

Men who work out moderately and regularly, report increased libidos, more satisfying sex, and fewer erectile failures.
Sexual difficulty as physical

The male sex drive constructs male sexuality entirely in terms of the body, arousal is physical, and as such sexual difficulties were always understood in terms of physical causes. In Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom - the master craftsman's guide to sex (Men's Health Oct 2001), a number of the tasks discussed suggested possible difficulties with sex: “use a tool that’s too small for the job”; “perform all night”; “operate heavy equipment while under the influence of alcohol”. The advice on penis size is addressed by firstly reminding readers of the shame of small genitals:

Not for you, of course, but perhaps you have a friend who in a moment of weakness confessed this secret to you.

A sexual position that will compensate is recommended; the same for alcohol induced impotence. The advice for performing all night is essentially about delaying orgasm. This is not advice about premature ejaculation it is about going beyond the norm “if you want to last through a sexual marathon”.

Any sexual difficulties that men did encounter had physical causes - alcohol, exhaustion, lack of fitness - and so physical remedies - sexual positions, stamina. This construction was reflected in a rare discussion of erectile dysfunction that took place in a special feature on prostate cancer (Men's Health Dec 2001). The feature is very positive and information rich, encouraging men to be screened, speak to their doctors and to other men. In one item a man’s impotence, caused by surgery for prostate cancer, is discussed. After reminding readers that the problem is not being able to get an erection strong enough for penetration, a number of treatment options are discussed, including penile injections and vacuum pumps. An inflatable penile prosthesis is discussed in another case history. Although the disadvantages of all the treatments are mentioned, in particular the artifice of injections and the lack of spontaneity, the possibility that other sexual activities might be desired, or even an option, is not addressed. Intercourse is unquestionably what men desire.
The physical focus extended to another topic common in *Men’s Health*. A significant proportion of the health and science news pieces were about fertility. They usually reported the findings of a scientific study:

- *Your sperm are duds!* (*Men’s Health* Sept 2001)
- *Problem reproduction: Work hassles are bad news for your sperm production* (*Men’s Health* Oct 2001)
- *An insolvent sperm count* (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001)
- *Don’t lose you mojo* (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001)
- *Don’t mix your medications* (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001)

These focused on reduced sperm count due to diet, performance enhancing supplements, and environmental pollutants. Again, any difficulty a man encountered was a variation in his normal trouble free sexuality. The concern about fertility may reflect the older readership of *Men’s Health*; fertility was never raised as an issue in *FHM*.

**Summary**

Driven male sexuality was a prevailing discourse in the representations of male sexuality as always desiring and trouble free. In contrast to women’s problematic and mysterious sexuality, male sexuality was positioned as simple, trouble free and easily aroused. Indeed men were often represented as already aroused; a lack of sexual desire was not an issue.

The almost complete absence of representations of men not desiring sex or intercourse, attests to the hegemonic status of the male sex drive as the truth about male sexuality. In the survey study (Chapter 8), it is reported that the two sources where men sought information when experiencing sexual difficulties was their partner and men’s magazines. This is clearly a concern, as the range of sexual difficulties depicted by men’s magazines, and the causes and solutions, do not give men many options. In the representations described above, any problems that men did encounter were positioned as the result of physical or external factors - the environment, alcohol or drugs, a lack of fitness. The physical focus implied a
physical solution which was reflected in the articles. Where female sexuality was inherently problematic, male sexuality was positioned as inherently problem free.

5.4. Discussion

The discourse analysis presented here identified and examined representations in men’s magazines to reveal the discourses that were being drawn on. These discourses present truths or knowledge about male sexuality, which construct men, women, sex and relationships, in particular ways. These constructions precluded some practices and allowed other; for example, intercourse was given preference where sexual activity without intercourse was never a viable option. The analysis demonstrated that there is not one account of male sexuality. Instead, there were a number of coherent accounts, which, for the most part, impinged on rather than contradicted each other. Most articles contained a number of representations, often drawing on a number of discourses. Four discourses circulating in the representations contained in eight issues of Men’s Health and FHM were discussed: male sexual skill, compromise, salvation and deficiency, and driven male sexuality. Rather than reviewing these discourses - considerable discussion and relevant summaries were undertaken above - it is worth considering these discourses in light of previous work on men’s magazines.

In their analysis of FHM UK, Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks (2000) reported a relatively limited representation of male sexuality, which they contend constructed male sexuality as authentic and doubt free. Stevenson and his colleagues call this the new lad - a reaction to the new man that emerged in the early 90s. Whatever the new man was the new lad is not; he is authentic where the new man was trying to be something he was not. Stevenson et al. suggest this representation is unapologetic, as there is no defence for masculine behaviour because there is no alternative - this is who we are. This was certainly not the representation apparent in the magazines examined above. Indeed, the four discourses identified in this analysis, and the representations that articulated them, were often contradictory and suggest a more complex account - indeed it is more appropriate to describe them as accounts - of heterosexual male sexuality.
One of the implications of being positioned as authentic or natural is that the new lad is fixed; he is doing what he is supposed to do. Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks call this ‘constructed certitude’ (a concept discussed by Beck, 1997), an attempt to replace doubt and uncertainty with certainty and security. This suggests that the world is more stable than it actually is (P. A. Jackson et al., 2001). Gauntlett (2002) argues that far from portraying a fixed inherent masculinity, men’s magazines depict masculinity explicitly as socially constructed; if it were inherent, men would know what to do. Indeed men’s magazines provide an assortment of practices for men to *do* masculinity and sexuality - what to wear, what accessories to buy, the kind of fragrance to wear, what to say to a woman, how to have ‘successful’ sex, etc.

Perhaps more importantly, these representations provide the resources so men do not fail. This is reminiscent of the argument made by Ussher (1997b) that women draw on cultural resources to *do* femininity. This is perhaps a different kind of constructed certitude, one that suggests you can learn the rules, and perhaps some tricks, to make the world a more stable and certain place, to deal with the “messiness of life” (P. A. Jackson et al., 2001, p. 88). In the analysis described above the proliferation of how-to articles, the *FHM* rules, the reassuring articles about how to decode women’s body language, arguably all provide a “cultural ‘comfort zone’” (p. 130), in a world where the certainties of traditional male sexuality have been undermined.

It is interesting that Stevenson et al.’s new lad was so focused on autonomy, with the emphasis on the authenticity of the self even to the detriment of a relationship with a woman. Stevenson et al. characterises this as a “fundamentalist attempt to reinscribe male dominance” (2000, p. 377). In their analysis, they identified an unproblematic view of one-night stands and casual relationships; men’s needs for intimacy and emotional connection were never addressed in the articles they examined. This very narrow view of men’s needs was not reflected in the analysis described above. There were two accounts of male sexuality in relationships. In the compromise discourse, male sexuality was regulated to meet social conventions and women’s expectations. Within this discourse, it was reasonable for men to transform their sexuality: being in a relationship required change (which was often framed as part of a compromise bargain with women). In the salvation discourse, male sexuality was positioned as deficient and potentially detrimental to men. Both accounts position a relationship as
desirable, though this is far more explicit in the salvation discourse. The inward focus of the new lad is replaced by an outward focus on the social and relational. Many of the articles described in this analysis were about negotiating being in relation with women - rules and advice about them, how to deal with them, how not to make a mess with them. Arguably, in the push to uncover the mysteries of woman, man’s own sexuality is ‘revealed’ (constructed).

The status of this discourse analysis

At the end of his analysis on discoursing jealousy, Paul Stenner (1993) makes an important point that should be reiterated here. The reading provided by any analysis of discourse is “always located - it always comes from some ‘position’ and is, therefore, always-already incomplete” (p. 130). This is because any discourse analysis, from a post-structuralist perspective, requires the bringing in of knowledge from outside the text we are deconstructing (Parker, 1990). For Stenner, this meant his personal knowledge of relationships; thus, his concerns - and so the knowledge he brings - necessarily impinge on his reading. All readings given here are both provisional and partial; that is, my own positions constrain the readings I can give. My position as a lesbian and as a woman meant that on the one hand, I felt the magazines were not attempting to speak to me, but neither did I feel they were speaking about me. This is not to suggest I was somehow outside the reach of the magazines and the representations in them. Although I did sometimes feel like I was looking in on a very different world to my own, I am not making claims to objectivity. Indeed much of the magazine content was engaging and during my analysis was a common topic with my friends and colleagues. Jackson et al.’s (2001) account of the researchers’ personal responses to researching men’s magazines is particularly illuminating on this issue; Kate Brooks for example, talks about the anxiety and envy generated by images of young, toned, tanned women’s bodies (P. A. Jackson et al., 2001) and her irritation that she was letting them get to her. What might this mean in terms of the readings I can provide or the knowledges I have access to? Parallel to this is my relatively recent arrival in Australia; there were some culturally specific meanings I may not have had access to. Conversely, this may have meant I was also more aware that some content was specifically Australian. I am not
suggesting an Australian heterosexual man or woman could provide a more complete or accurate reading, simply a different one. Moreover, immersing myself in the culture of (Australian) male heterosexuality for the duration of this research project, has arguably provided me with access to the cultural resources to be able to recognise, at least the prevailing, discourse of male sexuality.

In the current research, men’s magazines were a convenient, boundaried and manageable source of material for the analysis of cultural representations and discourses about male sexuality; they were not the focus of the analysis. This contrasts with work by Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks (2001; 2000), who examined the content of men’s magazines in order to make sense of the cultural phenomena of men’s magazines, and to identify the resources men drew on to make sense of them. In contrast, the analysis presented here is part of a broader project about Australian men using representations of heterosexual male sexuality that are culturally available to ‘make sense’ of their sexual experiences. This required an analysis of the discourses and representations that were available within Australia, a task that is continued in the following chapter. It is a central feature of post-structuralist discourse analysis that the discourses identified in a piece of text are (re)produced, that is, though they may be modified within that text, they are already available beyond that text.

Finally, discourses and representations are not fixed but shifting, and culturally and historically located. The geographical, historical, cultural and political location of the analysis is reflected in the analysis. This is also the case with previous work on men’s magazines. For example, Stevenson et al. (2000) conducted their analysis of FHM in a late 1990’s Britain when lad culture was arguably at its height. An examination of FHM and Men’s Health in the early 2000’s in an Australian context, unsurprisingly reveals different representations - though there are also some similarities. Much of the discussion in this section also applies to the discursive examinations undertaken in subsequent chapters.
5.5. Summary

This chapter was concerned with the analysis of representations of heterosexual male sexuality, representations that are pervasive but rarely systematically identified and analysed. The analysis presented here described a variety of representations, and four of the discourses they articulate. The different accounts of male sexuality identified suggest that there is no simple coherent truth about male sexuality. Cultural understandings of heterosexual male sexuality are not singular. Further, the evidence of the transformation of the male sex drive discourse, by the other discourses, means that focusing only on hegemonic male sexuality denies its shifting and local character. This analysis demonstrates the nuances of the cultural understandings of male sexuality in contemporary Australia, revealing complexity, compromise and contradiction.

The analysis presented in this chapter addressed the first research question of this study: what are the different ways heterosexual male sexuality is represented in the accounts of individual men and in popular culture? The discursive examination of representations, to address this question will be continued in the following chapter where the focus will be on the representations circulating in men’s talk.
CHAPTER 6. The Hegemonic Truths of Male Sexuality: An Interview Study

I will call assujetissiment [subjectification] the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only one of the given possibilities of organisation of our self-consciousness. (Foucault, 1988, p. 253)

Subjection…regimes of knowledge through which human beings have come to recognise themselves as certain kinds of creatures, the strategies of regulation and tactics of action to which these regimes of knowledge have been connected, and the correlative relations that human beings have established with themselves, in taking themselves as subjects (Rose, 1996, p. 11)

The central proposition of subjectification, as described by Foucault and developed by others like Nikolas Rose, Judith Butler and Bronwyn Davies, is that in order to experience himself as a subject, a man must take up certain knowledge as knowledge about himself. These regimes of knowledge, and the truths they produce about male sexuality, constitute the conditions of possibility within which a particular kind of heterosexual male subject is intelligible (Davies et al., 2001). It is only by submitting to these truths that an individual man can come into existence as a recognisable subject - recognisable to himself and to others (Butler, 1997). Thus, “for men, the question is not whether they take up masculine discourses as practices of self-
signification, but rather which masculine discourses to engage in” (Whitehead, 2002, p. 110).

The review of discursive literature undertaken in Chapter 3 and the analysis of magazines in Chapter 5 identified a number of truths associated with male heterosexuality. The analysis presented in this chapter continues to address the first research question of interest in this study: what are the different ways heterosexual male sexuality is represented in the accounts of individual men and in popular culture? This chapter extends the previous analysis by examining the truths of male sexuality that circulate in Australian men’s accounts produced in individual and group interviews; this is not designed to evidence the previously identified discourses and representations. These truths constitute what men “take to be natural and inevitable” (Rose, 1996, p. 2) about men and their sexuality, what are sometimes referred to as fictions that function as facts (see for example Ussher, 2003; Walkerdine, 1997) to highlight the fictionality of the subject (Davies, 1997). It is important to reiterate the statues of these accounts: they do not describe how men are, but rather “what they take themselves to be” (Rose, 1996, p. 96). In this analysis, the focus is on what men position as truths - knowledge that is taken to be inevitable and natural. This is an account of hegemonic heterosexual male sexuality as it appears in the accounts of men in Sydney. In Chapter 7 this analysis continues to explore men’s negotiation of these truths, and the consequences of these negotiations for men’s sexual subjectivity and practice.

6.1. Methodology

This interview study was designed to examine the relationship between cultural representations of heterosexual male sexuality and men’s subjective experience of their sexuality. As outlined in Chapter 4, across four stages of interviewing three different methods were employed: semi-structured or narrative interviewing, individual or group interviews, a peer interviewer or an unknown interviewer. Table 6.1 summarises the methods utilised in each stage. These different methods were not employed to allow a comparison of the impact of different methods on the accounts produced by men - though this would be an interesting methodological exercise.
Rather the intention was to include a broader range of men by making available different ways of participating, with different interview dynamics, thus generating a greater diversity of accounts across contexts. It was hoped that these strategies would allow multiple perspectives to be included in the research, thus extending the scope of the knowledge produced (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of the mixed method approach).

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The stages were undertaken sequentially such that each stage influenced the design of the next; the exception to this is the last stage, which was conducted in parallel with the third stage. This process allowed a period of review to follow each stage of interviewing, where methodological and participant issues could be examined. The following sections describe the design and procedure for each of the four stages in more detail, along with any significant issues that arose during the review period. A detailed discussion of recruitment strategies and their outcomes was undertaken in Chapter 4.

**Procedure**

*Individual semi-structured interviews with a peer interviewer*

This first stage of interviewing was conducted with nine men who were recruited through the friendship and professional networks of three peer interviewers (see Chapter 4). The time and location of the interview was negotiated between the participant and interviewer; interviews took place in August 2001. A semi-structured schedule was used, which focused on communication, intimacy and cultural representations (see Appendix C.1). The first two areas of the schedule - intimacy
and communication - are common topics in literature on men and sexuality, particularly in men writing about their own experiences (for example Abbott, 1990; Radican, 1995; Seidler, 1985, 1989, 1992). Men were asked what these two terms meant to them and about their experiences of intimacy and communication in sex and in relationships. A review of the literature on men’s responses to cultural representations (for example, Gill et al., 2000; Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2002; Wienke, 1998), suggested directly addressing men’s awareness and responses to cultural representations was an effective interviewing strategy. As such, section three of the interview schedule asked men to describe media representations of men, sex and sexuality that they were aware of. Men were then asked about the relevance and importance of these representations for their lives, for example, did they see them as something to be emulated. Finally, men were asked about their responses to these images: how did they make them feel about themselves and what kind of expectations do they encourage.

A review of the first stage, including discussions with the peer interviewers and a preliminary examination of the themes emerging in the interviews, revealed a number of issues with the direct approach taken in addressing men’s negotiation of representations. Firstly, men tended to talk about actors or characters from television or the movies that said something about masculinity; sex and sexuality were not often mentioned in relation to specific representations. It was when men talked in more general terms, about their own experiences and knowledge, that the interview material appeared richer and that representations of sex or sexuality were discussed. Further, initial analysis of the specific representations that men did talk about, suggested depictions that did not accord with the men’s beliefs or experiences; that is, they jarred. Representations that did reflect the men’s own experiences were rarely discussed, either because they were uncommon, or because they were not memorable. A final issue was that men often took up the position that being influenced by representations was a ‘bad thing’; though this is perhaps unsurprising given the focus on the negative impact of culture in much media effects research (see Chapter 2). The aim of this study was not to elicit men’s knowledge of representations, nor to conduct an analysis of audience responses to specific representations. Thus, the outcome of this first stage of interviewing was the decision
to focus less on reactions to specific representations and more broadly on sexual subjectivity, in combination with a more flexible interview schedule.

*Individual narrative interviews with an unknown interviewer*

This second stage of interviewing was conducted with nine men who were recruited through the sample of men that were recruited for the survey study (see chapter 4). I conducted all the interviews, in the School of Psychology clinic rooms at the University of Western Sydney (Bankstown) or in a research office at FPA Health (Ashfield). This stage of interviewing took place between December 2001 and February 2002. The interview schedule was developed around issues and themes that arose out of the first stage and from a further review of the literature. These issues represented broad areas of interest and were not always addressed directly in the interview: (1) What does your sexuality mean to you; (2) what does it mean to you to be a heterosexual man; (3) what are the expectations and pressure on you; (4) what do you think women’s expectations of you are; (5) do women have different expectations of you to the expectations you have of yourself. The schedule allowed considerable flexibility for both interviewer and participant, such that issues raised by the participants could be explored. A copy of the schedule is in Appendix C.1.

A broadly narrative approach was taken to these interviews, in that men were encouraged to tell stories about their experiences, to produce a narrative of their sexuality. The men were not asked to produce a single narrative, a method described by Flick (1998) where the interviewer might simply ask the participant, ‘tell me how the story of your life occurred’. Rather they were encouraged to tell a series of stories around their sexuality and sexual experiences. To begin, a generative question (Flick, 1998) was asked about the potential contradiction between popular ideas of male sexuality and women’s expectations of men, with men being asked to talk about any experiences of this. From there the interviews tended to take on a similar course, with men talking about their current, or most recent, relationship and then looking back at previous sexual/relationship experiences. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if there were any issues they expected to talk about and didn’t, or if there were any issues they would like to talk about before the interview ended. These interviews produced a great variety of narratives, covering a diverse
range of topics and varying considerably in length. The review process that followed this stage of interviewing suggested adopting a more focused interviewing strategy in the next stage of interviewing.

*Individual semi-structured interviews with an unknown interviewer*

This third stage of interviewing was conducted with seven men aged 32 to 55 years; the average age was 42 years. As in the previous stage, men were recruited for individual interviews through the survey study sample. In an attempt to interview men who may have been involved in critically exploring the meaning of sex, sexuality or heterosexuality, there was a particular focus on recruiting men involved in men’s groups and organisations (3 of the participants). I conducted all the interviews, in the School of Psychology clinic rooms at the University of Western Sydney (Bankstown) or in a research office at FPA Health (Ashfield). This stage of interviewing took place between July and August 2002.

Again, themes that arose out of the previous stages of interviewing influenced the development of the interview schedule. A semi-structured schedule was employed, that is, although the focus was similar to the second stage specific questions were asked, and the order of presentation more strictly adhered to. The first section was designed to elicit representations of the ordinary man, Mr Average, in terms of sex and sexuality, and asked men to compare this to media portrayals of men and sexuality. Men were also asked to explore how similar they were to Mr Average. The second section focused on men’s own experiences of sex and sexuality, particularly around ideal and actual sexuality, and around sexual concerns and expectations. Where the first section was directed toward cultural notions of male sexuality, the second section was directed toward men’s own experiences and the meanings they drew on. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if there were any issues they expected to talk about and didn’t, or if there were any issues they would like to talk about before the interview ended. A copy of the schedule is in Appendix C.1.
Semi-structured group interviews with a peer interviewer

This fourth stage of interviewing was conducted with 20 men who were recruited through the friendship and professional networks of three peer interviewers (see Chapter 3). The time and location of the interview was negotiated between the participants and interviewer; interviews took place between June and August 2002. The fourth stage of interviewing used the same semi-structured interview schedule as used in the third stage, described above, but applied it to a group interview format. A copy of the schedule is in Appendix C.1.

General Procedure

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours; a two-hour limit was imposed on individual interviews, group interviews rarely lasted more than an hour. All interviews were tape recorded, with the participant’s permission. The person who conducted the interview usually transcribed it; this is true of all the peer interviews and the majority of the interviews conducted by myself. There are potential drawbacks to using interviewers to transcribe their own interviews, such as relying on memory to fill in inaudible parts of the recording. There is also the advantage that they are more likely to understand the interviewee for the very same reason. It was particularly important for the group interviews where identification of individual speakers can be difficult for transcribers (Flick, 1998). All transcribers used the same transcription conventions\(^{22}\): (...) indicates an untimed pause; underlining indicates words or phrases are stressed; CAPITALS indicates shouting or loudness; italics indicates whispering; [...] indicates part of transcript has been omitted, for example an interruption; (inaud.) indicates that part of the recording of interview was inaudible; and (doubt) indicates accuracy of transcription is in doubt. Brackets are also used to indicate laughter, crying, interruption, or to provide an explanation that is not part of transcript. Sounds were transcribed phonetically, for example hmm.

\(^{22}\) However, having different people transcribe the interviews revealed some of the problems in assuming that everyone understands the instruction ‘transcribe everything that is said’ in the same way. Even the conventions outlined here were not always adhered to. For example, one interviewer was uncomfortable about transcribing swear words; in one instance the transcript read “F**k”, after some discussion it emerged that the word ‘fuck’ had been uttered and not spelt out as transcribed.
um, ah, ahmm. Colloquialisms, abbreviations, stutters, and half-said words were also transcribed. Finally, punctuation was used for readability.

Participants

In total 45 men took part in this interview study. The men ranged in age from 18 to 63, average age 33 years. Table 6.2 reports a breakdown of the age and relationship status across each stage of interviewing. Detailed demographic information was presented in Chapter 3. Due to significant technical problems, four individual interviews were not transcribed, therefore the final data set consisted of four group interviews with 20 men and 21 individual interviews. Very little of the data collected in the first stage (individual semi-structured interviews with a peer interviewer) was used in this analysis; this reflects the methodological issues raised earlier.

| Table 6.2. Interview stage by age group and relationship status |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Stage | Total | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46+   | Single | Married | Sep/Div |
| I     | 9     | 5     | 2     | 2     | -     | 4      | 4       | 1       |
| II    | 9     | 2     | 2     | -     | 5     | 3      | 5       | 1       |
| III   | 7     | -     | 2     | 2     | 3     | 2      | 4       | 1       |
| IV    | 20    | 13    | 4     | 3     | -     | 15     | 5       | -       |
| Total | 45    | 20    | 10    | 7     | 8     | 24     | 18      | 3       |

The following are brief ‘pen portraits’ of the men whose interviews form part of the analysis presented here. These descriptions are based on field notes written after each interview and during coding and analysis, on demographic information given in a pre-interview survey, and on readings of the interview transcripts. As well as providing some context for reading the extracts and the interpretations provided here, they also give a sense of the participants as people. Individual portraits are given for men who took part in an individual interview, and general descriptions are provided for the group interviews. As noted previously, very little of the data collected during the first stage of interviewing was used in this analysis, as such pen portraits for these men are not provided.
Jim is a single man in his 30s. He has had few significant relationships. During the interview, he talked about being a recovering alcoholic and about the personal development work he has done around this and around being a man. Jim presented himself as a ‘nice’ man, and talked about the work he does to avoid being a ‘bastard’. He suggested women sometimes like ‘bastards’. A short while after the interview, Jim contacted me to suggest we meet up socially. Recruitment source: Community organisation.

Bill is a married man in his 50s, with teenage children. He has had a number of long-term affairs during his marriage, a pattern repeated in previous relationships. During the interview, he suggested he would like to be having a more complete relationship with his wife, who did not share any of his interests. Although Bill named his mistresses, he never named his wife. Recruitment source: Sexpo.

Grant is in his late 40s. He has had a several significant relationships and has no children. He is currently single and house-shares with two younger men. At the end of the interview, Grant expressed disappointment at the lack of questions around his sexual preferences; we subsequently spent an hour talking about his sexual techniques and knowledge, and how different he believed he was to other men. Recruitment source: Sexpo.

Sach is in his mid 20s. He is currently single, but has had significant relationships though not with women he would consider marrying. During the interview, he talked about the conflict between the traditions of his family heritage and western/Australian conventions. Recruitment source: Community organisation.

Brendan is a married man in his 30s with young children. For a significant proportion of his marriage, Brendan has been having relationships with women he meets through the internet. He expressed a significant amount of dissatisfaction with his marriage, and never referred to his wife by her name. He was the only participant who made a direct pass at me during the interview, and after the interview talked about us meeting up. Recruitment source: Sexpo.
Reg is a married man in his late 50s, with grown up children. Since retiring, Reg feels his sexual relationship with his wife has improved. Reg has a physical disability, which he suggested during his interview meant he was free of some of the expectations of masculinity. Of all the men interviewed, Reg’s characterisation of his wife and their relationship was the most loving and supportive; he was one of the only men to use his wife’s name during the interview. Recruitment source: Community organisation.

Daniel is a married man in his 40s; he does not have children (though he suggested he would have liked to but his wife did not, this was a source of some conflict in the marriage). During the interview he talked about his wife’s serious illness and the impact of this on their relationship. He suggested he was very dissatisfied with his marriage, believing he had taken on a significant carer role. Daniel described a very active sexual fantasy life and described his regular masturbation as comforting. Recruitment source: Community organisation.

Fred is a married man in his early 60s, with grown up children. During the interview he asked me to turn the tape off twice, the second time to come out to me as a cross dresser (his term). After some discussion, we agreed to talk about this ‘on tape’. Fred talked at length about his wife’s illness, and the impact this had had on their sex life. He also expressed frustration at her reluctance to discuss sex. After the interview, Fred asked me to post him details of the counselling which was made available to all participants; he knew his wife would open his mail and felt it would create an opportunity to talk and perhaps seek help together. Recruitment source: Sexpo.

Ramu is in his 30s. Ramu is a recent migrant, and has no family here. He is in a long distance relationship with a woman who lives in his home country; her parents are preventing their marriage. Ramu and his partner communicate often but they meet very irregularly (and in secret). Much of Ramu’s talk around sex and sexuality was medicalised; he talked from the position of health care provider in the interview, describing what he would tell clients. Recruitment source: Community organisation.

Jacob is in his 40s, and has just begun a relationship after a long period of celibacy. He is very involved in community work, and talked about the isolation of modern
man and the need to establish connections between men. Jacob has undertaken a lot of personal development work, and though he was reflexive during the interview his use of self-development language was sometimes distancing. Jacob was one of only two men to talk about sexual relationships with men, something he would like to be free to pursue within his new (heterosexual) relationship. Recruitment source: Media.

**Kevin** is a widower in his 40s, with a young son. During the interview, Kevin often talked about the overemphasis on sex within relationships, and his own pride in his control over his sexual drive. Recruitment source: University of Western Sydney.

**Steven** is a single man in his 30s. He has been celibate for the last few years, following a bad relationship (possibly abusive), and has removed himself from most social interactions. He was the only participant who explicitly framed the interview as a welcome opportunity to talk. This was a difficult interview to organise, requiring considerable negotiation and clarification of my interests; he cancelled the interview twice before we eventually met. During the interview, Steven was very nervous and tentative. He asked me to stop recording the interview a number of times, and we continued to talk off tape for a short while; he said there were only so many things that made him feel bad about himself that he wanted to say ‘on tape’\(^{23}\). Recruitment source: Media.

**Group One** consisted of seven single men aged 19 to 21 years. This is a friendship group: all the men attend the same educational institution and socialise together. The interviewer is a recent member of the friendship group and is older than the participants; he was the only male interviewer in this study. The interview was conducted in a house that some members of the group share. Recruitment source: Peer recruiter.

\(^{23}\) The function of the tape was interesting in a number of interviews. Some men asked me to stop recording while we negotiated what would be discussed and not discussed ‘on tape’, then recording would recommence and the interview would resume. Sometimes, as in Steven’s interview, it seemed that what was said ‘off tape’ was somehow safer, less damaging or less fixed that if it had been said ‘on tape’. This raises an ethical question about whether participants understand that all of their interactions, not just those ‘on tape’, with the researcher may be used as data; as demonstrated by my description of pre and post interview interactions, and references to discussions that occurred ‘off tape’.
**Group Two** consisted of three single men. Two of the men (late teens) had very little relationship or sexual experience, while the third man (late 20s) had been in a relationship for several years. Not all of the men in this group knew each other, although all knew the interviewer. The interviewer is a woman of similar age to the men; all identified as Asian or Asian Australians. This group interview was conducted in a seminar room at the University of Western Sydney. Recruitment source: Peer recruiter.

**Group Three** consisted of six men; apart from the youngest member (early 20s) of the group, the rest were aged in their late 30s and early 40s, married and three had young children. All the men are part of the military reserves, and spend a lot of time together in that context. The interviewer is a woman, and a member of the military reserves. The interview was conducted at a military base, prior to a regular training meeting. Recruitment source: Peer recruiter.

**Group Four** consisted of four single men aged in their mid 20s. This is a friendship group, all the members know each other well and socialise regularly. Two women conducted this interview; one was a member of the group. The interview was conducted in the house of one interviewer. All of the men in the group were born in Asia, as were both of the interviewers. Recruitment source: Peer recruiter.

**Analytic strategy**

The group and individual interview data were coded and analysed together; this is an important methodological, and to some extent epistemological, point. One of the conventions in focus group research, especially that conducted within a positivist paradigm, is to emphasise the interactive nature of the data. In the current study, the data generated through the individual interviews are also framed as interactions, in so far as they are “discussions occurring in a specific, controlled setting” (Smithson, 2000, p. 105). This reflects the post-structuralist characterisation of interview data as a co-construction between the interviewer and the interviewee.
The analysis presented here followed a discourse analytic technique called thematic decomposition (Stenner, 1993). This approach identifies the thematics in a narrative by “separating a given text into coherent themes or stories” (p. 114), and then traces the subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990) that individuals take up and resist within those themes. This is a useful and appropriate method for the current study as it allows the identification of the storylines in the interviews, the subject positions available within these storylines, and how men negotiate these subject positions. In common with most discourse analytic techniques, this strategy involves a close reading and rereading of the interview transcripts to identify patterns (H. Marshall, Stenner, & Lee, 1999). A small number of interviews were selected and a detailed reading undertaken to identify themes. Four major themes emerged across the interviews: the meaning of sex, relating to women, relating to men, representations of Mr. Average. Within each theme there were several sub-themes. A global coding frame, covering a very broad range of major and minor themes that occurred across the interviews, was developed from this initial close reading, from field notes made during the interviewing stage and through discussions with colleagues (see Table C.1, Appendix C.2).

One theme, the meaning of sex, was chosen for further analysis as it covered issues that were particularly salient to the exploration of sexual subjectivity and sexual representations. A more detailed coding frame was developed for this theme only (see Table C.2, Appendix C.2). All of the interview transcripts were subsequently coded with this more detailed coding frame, using a qualitative data analysis package (NVivo). In exploring the interview data contained in this theme a number of hegemonic truths about heterosexual male sexuality became clear. These truths constitute the taken for granted knowledge about male sexuality, they appeared repeatedly across the individual and group interviews. The truths presented in the analysis below often cut across the themes identified in the detailed ‘meaning of sex’ coding frame; this contrasts with the analysis in Chapter 7 where three specific themes are explored.

The convention in discourse analytic research to include extracts from the data that has been analysed, has been followed here. These are not illustrations of the data but
examples of the data (J. Potter & Wetherell, 1987); this is done to allow the reader to see how a particular interpretation has been made (for discussion see Chapter 4).

6.2. The hegemonic truths about male sexuality

That which is invented is not an illusion; it constitutes our truth (Rose, 1996, p. 3)

The focus of this analysis is on the hegemonic account of heterosexual male sexuality, on a specific set of truths that men must take up to be recognisable, to themselves and to others, as hetero-sexual men. Four truths make up the hegemonic account explored here: men want sex/more sex; sex is a physical experience; men’s sexuality is different to women’s sexuality; controlling the sexual drive and the sexual body. Although all focus on men, they often reflect knowledge about women. Further, they draw on a range of cultural discourses around sexuality and gender, many of which were described in the literature review of discursive research on sexuality (Chapter 3) and in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5). Whilst these truths make up the hegemonic account of male sexuality this is not necessarily a unitary account. Moreover, the truths are highly allied; their separation in the following analysis is primarily for ease of analysis.

Men want sex/more sex

MEN want more - whether he's a bloke in Birdsville, a tribesman in Tanzania or a metrosexual in Manhattan. They share a universal craving for more sex, more often with more women, according to a historic global sex survey of 16,288 people in 52 countries on six continents. (In the long-term, Aussie libido leads world, Jackman & Warne-Smith, 2003, p. 3)

Darren: I just need more sex
(Group interview- ages 23-41 & in relationships.)
Kevin: so as far as sexual needs go, yes, I'm, I'm a man
(Individual interview - age 43 & widower.)

The expression of a desire for sex - for more sex - was like a mantra in the interviews, repeated across individual and group interviews, by single men and men in relationships, and by younger and older men. It was often so taken for granted that it was not explicitly articulated, either because it simply was the truth about men, “I’m a man”, or because it was self-evidently opposite to the sexuality of women, who did not want more sex, indeed they were described as often refusing it. Men wanting sex/more sex appeared to operate as the fundamental ‘truth’ that defined male sexuality; it was never questioned nor challenged in the interviews. This truth was also evident in the analysis of representations in men’s magazines (Chapter 5), where it was often transformed to accommodate other discourses or accounts, but was never directly challenged.

For the men in this study, the ideal was not better sex - more pleasurable, enjoyable, intense, connected, or meaningful sex – it was simply more. There were three notable characteristics common to this truth. Firstly, and simply, men want more sex than they are currently getting. Men often quantified their desire by describing an amount of sex that they felt would be ideal for them: “a couple of times a week”, “three nights a week” and “once a week”. Other men, usually those in relationships, simply wanted sex regularly. This sense of a measurable standard, be that an exact frequency or a more generalised ‘regularly’, acted as a way to judge the reality of their experience - which was always positioned as inadequate. Implicit in a measurable standard is also the notion that it can be met; there was an amount of sex that would be ‘enough’, even though the definition of ‘enough’ varied widely across men. The second feature was the desire for sex with multiple partners, with expressions such as “two or three girls”, “a different bird”, “someone different”, “harem” and “variety is the spice of life”. This occurred across single men and men in relationships. The implicit assumption here was that one woman could never meet the sexual needs of one man, and that the desire for variety was natural - an evocation of sociobiological accounts of male sexuality. The third feature was that the focus was on sex - having it, getting it, doing it - and not on sex with a particular woman.
In the third and fourth stages of interviews, participants were asked about their ideal sexuality and how this differed from their own sexuality. Wanting sex/more sex was the first response by most men to the question: “If you could wave a magic wand and everything would be exactly as you want it, how would your sexuality be?”

Dinh: I'm not getting enough, enough at the moment, so if I had a
Christian: I agree with you (laughs)
Dinh: magic wand, I'd love it, I would actually have, you know, two or three girls at the one time or something
All: (laughter)
Dinh: That is my sexual fantasy, I guess
I: Oh okay
Dinh: or desire
Christian: Yeah, that's the same as me
(Group interview - ages 18-27 & single.)

Will: I'd be having sex a couple of times a week, at least
Robbie: Right now, it depends on the phases of your life, right now, I'd just like to lead the Jerry Seinfeld life, every week you have a different bird.
(inaud.) That'll be good for me. (inaud.) three nights a week
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

These expressions of desire for sex/more sex were not limited to the magic wand question:

Cathal: I don't think it matters if he gets lots and lots of women but as long as he's getting his end away regularly then he can be satisfied
Nigel: that's some guys, not all guys, I know one guy especially up in Newcastle who just likes to get women every week, that's like all of us prior to being married and being tied up yeah
Darren: When I was younger, I used to go out to Alexander's and all that yeah (laughing) and every week there would be somebody different whether I got a bit
Mark: (…) (inaud.) heading out west is Penrith Panthers there's more females out there than guys and they all go and they know that at the end of the night then they'll have one or two
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

Bill: you know, I, I always, you know, got caught in that business that I was terrified that they would (…) entrap me, and deprive me, of my sexual freedom (…) because you know, I, I really enjoy and love sex and, and you know, I couldn't imagine (…) ahh you know, not having it regularly
(Individual interview - age 54 & married.)

These extracts above are from men in relationships who articulated this same notion of a desire for sex/more sex. However, these men often articulated a difficulty that was absent in the single men’s accounts. They suggest that their desire for sex may be incompatible with the reality of being in a relationship, where the assumption is of monogamy. Indeed, for some of these men the ideal was associated with being single. For example, the men in the first extract above, talk about when they were single/young, where getting more sex was as simple as going looking for it. In the second extract, being in a relationship is associated with deprivation of sexual freedom, which in turn is linked to not having sex regularly. The desire to have multiple sexual partners and the desire to have regular sex become the same, something a monogamous partner will deprive him of. This incompatibility, between regular sex and a monogamous relationship, was a recurring theme in the accounts given by men in relationships; successful subjectification as a hetero-sexual-man may be a more problematic project for these men.

Apart from one man who talked about wanting to negotiate having sexual relationships outside his current relationship (in his case, with men), no other men in this study talked about alternative relationship structures. The possibility of having an explicitly non-monogamous relationship appeared to be nil; though not unimaginable. The occasional references to swingers or having a harem were all framed as something other people do, or an unlikely fantasy.
A biological account

It was rare for men to spontaneously explain why they desired sex/more sex, it was simply positioned as the truth about being a man. However, a biological explanation was implicit in a significant proportion of accounts, most notably when men were asked to provide an account of male sexuality. The biological account was usually expressed in terms of a “basic, biological urge, drive or instinct which demands satisfaction” (M. Jackson, 1987, p. 72).

Daniel: but there's also this kind of ahmm (...) drive you know, that's just al, it's there,
(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

Jarrod: you have urges to do things
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

Mark: you'd have to say that you get an urge
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

Malik: I have you know, a need, I'm not lying
(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

The male sex drive discourse discussed in Chapter 3, and first described by Wendy Hollway (Hollway, 1984, 1984, 1998; Hollway & Jefferson, 1998), is evident in the extracts above. In this discourse, male sexuality is constructed as biologically driven (see Bogart et al., 2000; Gavey et al., 1999; Kippax et al., 1990; Waldby et al., 1993). An important part of this account is the categorising of man’s sexual needs as basic physiological needs, through comparisons with food and water (an analogy evoked by a number of men). If sex is a matter of physiological need, it is positioned as essential for survival, as in the extracts below.

Ramu: so yeah, sexual needs, which I guess is very, needs in, for my age.
And think I shouldn't be saying this but it sounds very pathological but. Yeah, it does, it does it's a means for a want, it's a very basic need. If we look at
Maslow's hierarchy that they have food and water and put sex as a basic need, a physiological need, and a psychological need, so yeah, which I am not getting any of, so yeah
(Individual interview - age 32 & de facto.)

Jim: Ahmm it’s just something everyone's entitled to (I: Hmm) and should have, and if you're being denied sex (…) in your life, then, then, a (…) yeah its, it's a crime (I: Hmm) should be a crime. I kind of like that, the way, that way of thinking, I think that's right
(Individual interview - age 35 & single.)

In the first extract above, Ramu’s use of scientific theory serves to reinforce his claim that sex is a basic need. Moreover, the fact that sex is like food, and that Ramu is not “getting any” positions this state of affairs as serious and a threat to his very survival. According to Margaret Jackson (1987), the positioning of sex as a need akin to food is a common characteristic of the scientific model of sexuality. These analogies lead to notions of “sex starvation” (p. 72), and relate to the survival of the individual. In interviews, men often drew a contrast between how much sex they were having and how much they should be having; it was implicit that there was an ideal or normal amount. A surprising number of the men when interviewed spontaneously mentioned the last time they had sex or how often they had sex in a particular time frame. Men often gave the exact date, and one man came armed with a post-it note containing the dates they he had had sex with his wife in the preceding year24. All framed this in terms of how unacceptable this situation was.

In the second extract, sex is more than just as physiological need, it is an entitlement. The denial of sex by women is akin to a crime, for although there is no explicit reference to women in Jim’s account, it is surely women who deny men sex. In positioning a woman who denies sex as a criminal, Jim articulates a common notion in the interviews: men are entitled to get sex from women. Victor Seidler (1989), talking about his own experiences of adolescent sexuality, describes a similar notion.

24 There is an interesting issue here of the positioning of the interviewer. I often felt I was positioned as a judge who could agree that, in my expert opinion, that was indeed not enough sex. With other men, it was perhaps more of a witness to the ‘injustice’ of their situation.
amongst his peers. Sex was something men were owed, had a right to, because it was a need; thus a woman who refused was seen to be blocking a male need, an act that produced considerable indignation. In her analysis of sexual violence and the law, Sue Lees (1997b) discusses how the defence of provocation relies on a similar understanding of male sexuality as sexual need. In one case she cites, a jury is instructed by the judge to consider whether a man’s loss of control - he murdered his wife - was a reasonable response to her provocation - she denied him sex; it is only in a framework of male sexual needs that this kind of argument is intelligible. Moreover, it is often this positioning of men as needing sex that is evident in women’s accounts of participating in undesired sexual activity; women often describe estimating how long they can ‘reasonably’ put off granting sex, based on when they last granted it and how much a man needs sex (see for example interviews with women cited by Gavey, 1993)25.

Seidler (1989) argues that the positioning of sex as both need and right, frames sex as a conquest in which men exert power over women to secure their rights (to sex). In a recent interview study with 100 heterosexual American men, Seal and Ehrhardt found a strong narrative where “women are characterised as adversaries to be battled and conquered” (2003, p. 302). This reflects the traditional heterosexual sexual script, where men are expected to be sexual initiators and women the boundary setters or gatekeepers. Arguably within this script, the difference between ‘normal’ sex and rape becomes blurred (Lees, 1997b), becoming a matter of the degree of pressure/coercion (for examples of this see Gavey, 1992). One participant in Seal and Ehrhardt’s study makes this explicit: “dating is all about sexual harassment - sort of pushing the limits to see how far the other person is willing to let you go. Society believes it is the man’s role to test the waters” (p. 302).

A complementary account was of male sexuality as a build up of something that needed to be gotten rid of or released. This resonates with Kinsey’s use of the phrase sexual ‘outlet’ (M. Jackson, 1987). Here, the denial of sex was not a matter of

25 A similar finding has been reported in research with women experiencing vulvar pain (vulvodynia) who often cannot engage in intercourse; they describe weighing up the amount of pain they may experience with how long the feel they can refuse intercourse with their ‘needy’ partner (Ayling, 2005).
survival, for the individual or the species. Rather sexual excess is positioned as resulting in frustration, creating a barrier interfering with men’s lives:

Matt: I often find it really hard to think when I’ve got a heavy boner. It’s really hard to think about anything else, but sticking it somewhere
(Group interview, 19-21 & single.)

Fred: maybe I just want to get myself relieved and (...) and then I can move on with the other things in my life
[...] Fred: it settled me back down and I can go about doing the things that I should be doing
(Individual interview - age 63 & married.)

Matt’s description of being unable to think is perhaps extreme, but it evokes the bodily felt nature of this account of male sexuality. Indeed, sexuality as an embodied experience was often more palpable in these build-up accounts than in the drive accounts discussed previously. Other men drawing on this account positioned the build up as something potentially detrimental to them or their health; one man joked that he was losing his hair. This is the same notion evoked by men who cite ‘blue balls’ or ‘lover’s nuts’ as a reason for needing sex (Paley, 1999; C. Struckman-Johnson, D. Struckman-Johnson, & P. B. Anderson, 2003).

A reproductive imperative

The reproductive imperative is central to the biological account of male sexuality (Potts, 2002), but was less common in these interviews than might be expected. However, the need to reproduce was given by some as the explanation for both men’s desire for sex, and their desire for multiple partners. Whereas the physiological explanation given above was directed to the survival of the individual man, the reproductive imperative is ostensibly concerned with the survival of the species, though both can be considered biologically functional accounts (Weeks, 1986). Often when this account was evoked, it was accompanied by claims to be the basic truth of male sexuality; phrases like “bubbles down to”, “the basics”, “it comes
down to”, “comes back to” and “ultimately” were common. Sex for reproduction, and male sexuality driven to reproduced, has one important consequence - the privileging of intercourse as the primary sexual practice (M. Jackson, 1984; Potts, 2002). The framing of intercourse as biological, often through ‘natural’ language, makes it “universal, pre-social, and essential” (Tiefer, 1997, p. 366), that is, beyond question.

Kevin: Aghmm we're attracted to somebody on one level, but I think subconsciously its generally there as a guide to, aghmm, ahh, a, an ideal biological partner for your offspring. So, aghmm, a part of the natural selection process effectively, that's what sex and sexuality really, bubbles down to I suppose

(Individual interview - age 43 & widower.)

In the extract above, a straightforward biological account of sex for reproduction is given. The use of the words “natural” and “subconsciously” suggests something beyond control or choice. Sex is for procreation and sexuality is the process by which the “ideal biological partner” is selected. Within this account, sex, but more importantly man’s desire for sex, is both necessary and altruistic. This account was rarely given in such explicitly scientific or deterministic terms. It was more usual to find men referring to the desire to “spread the seed”, which was often characterised as a drive men shared with animals, thus outside of cultural explanatory frameworks of male sexuality (Gavey et al., 1999; Tiefer, 1995). While the account above was gender neutral, the attribution of natural animal instincts was almost entirely to men, indeed there was the repeated positioning of man as active; it is after all men who go out and spread their seed.

Jack: Ultimately, it comes down to (...) the bloke (...) and I don't know if you agree with me or not; but it comes down to the animal in the human. Humans are animals, okay? No matter how brainy, or fucking (...) All: (laughter) Jack: All right, they want to spread the seed, and once they spread the seed, they want to piss off. All right? And it depends how strong your fucking mind is, and self-discipline, whatever else
Jack: And as an animal male they want to spread the seed, they want to spread the fucking genes that they've got in them. Okay? That's what it comes down to

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

It is interesting in the extract above, that what is fundamental, biological and therefore unquestionable, is the act of having sexual intercourse for the reproduction of the species; what is not part of this imperative is sticking around afterwards. The notion that men have no biological or evolutionary obligation to monogamy is a common feature of the sociobiological account (an often cited example of this is Donald Symons's "The evolution of human sexuality", 1979). This deterministic account of sexuality, where biology is seen to explain social behaviour, attributes male promiscuity to man’s near infinite supply of sperm, that is “men have an evolutionary propulsion toward spreading their seed to ensure diversity and reproductive success, and hence toward promiscuity” (Weeks, 1986, p. 49). Weeks goes on to explain the opposite characterisation of women as conservative in their approach to sex, and inherently monogamous, as being due to their less generous supply of eggs (approximately 400). Within this account then, men are biologically predetermined to have sex - sex that may result in reproduction, so coitus - but not programmed to establish ongoing relationships.

An interesting feature of the accounts evoking the notion of a reproductive imperative was the distancing effect of the sociobiological explanation. There was no direct reference to men’s own experience; that is, *blokes* want to, rather than, *I* want to. This contrasts with the earlier extracts where men described having or feeling urges or drives, which were often couched in bodily terms. This suggests that men may not experience their sexuality as a reproductive imperative; rather they are drawing on culturally available knowledge about male sexuality, such as the biologically deterministic model advanced in *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (J. Gray, 1995) or the evolutionary explanations advanced by Richard Dawkins (see for example *The Selfish Gene*, 1976), to account for the desire of sexual intercourse (Gavey et al., 1999).
**Sex as a physical experience**

A second important truth about male sexuality was that it was positioned as primarily oriented to sex as a physical experience. In the following extracts, men had been asked what the terms sex and sexuality meant to them.

Jonathan: sex is the physical kinda thing the intercourse kinda thing and sexuality is ahh is more of ahh spiritual thing of the mind
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

Dinh: It's still physical with me, at the at the moment. Umm I think there is a ment ment umm umm a mental side of sexuality but I think currently what we've actually discussed is mainly, umm phys- fairly physical I believe. Oh well, we did discuss about caring and sharing and stuff like that but the majority of our conversation is actually fairly physical
Tran: Yeah physical definitely overrides the mentality for guys like from maj the majority of guys (...) umm, yeah so, it's just basically all about like just, I think how sex is defined is like just basically about feeling good, as in physically-wise, rather than the mental aspect of it
(Group interview - ages 18-27 & single.)

As is demonstrated by the extracts above, most men gave an account of sex in physical terms; everything else - thinking, emotion, connection, relationships, meaning, “caring and sharing” - was separated from sex, often being categorised as *sexuality*. Even the satisfaction gained from sex was defined in physical terms “feeling good, as in physically-wise, rather than the mental aspect of it”; a finding echoed by previous research with Australian heterosexual men (Peart, Rosenthal, & Moore, 1996). The discussion below, between members of a focus group, is reminiscent of the debates around the Clinton-Lewinsky affair; the issue being, what counts as sex. What becomes clear is that sex is understood entirely in physical terms.
Hassad: Sex is the act
Robbie: Sex is the act
Hassad: Sexuality is your preferences
Robbie: Sexuality is the preceding, time and (inaud.)
Adam: One means erection, one means what you do
Matt: It does mean erection dude, really
I: Is that all it means? Erection?
All: (laughter)
Adam: No, no, no, it means a lot more, I was expecting help from the boys
All: (talking over each other)
Jack: (inaud.) about sex and about sexuality
Matt: What do they mean to us?
I: Yeah, what does sex, and sexuality mean?
Will: Sex means male or female, or the act of
Hassad: The act of copulating
Will: The act of having sex, which some people would argue isn't just
actually sticking your dick in (…)
Matt: And it doesn't necessarily need females, it could be (…)
Robbie: I mean, we could get deeper meaningful on the, is it love? Is it
making love? Or is it having sex?
Matt: Some people like to believe that lying in bed with another person is
having sex, yeah, but that's people (…)
Jack: One of the best mates reckons he didn't have sex with this girl because
he inserted it and pulled out
Matt: Yeah?
Hassad: That wasn't sex 'cause he pulled it out?
Robbie: Somebody's still attached to her now, he's still in there now is he?
Walking around all day with his dick up her?
Jack: No
Matt: No, he pulled it in, and then pulled it out
Hassad: Cause he pulled it out when he was about to (…)
Jack: He reckoned it was fucking sex, I mean, he said it wasn't sex
Matt: Yeah, that's fair enough, yeah

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)
In the extract above, the only attempt to frame sex in non-physical terms, Robbie’s question about the place of love, is ignored. Sex is constructed around an erect penis; the penetration of a vagina by a penis is taken for granted (“sticking your dick in”, “inserted it”, “intercourse”, “copulating”). Further, man is repeatedly positioned as active in this account of sex, and woman is silently passive. The discussion is about whether this is a sufficient definition of ‘sex’ or not, as opposed to whether there are alternative accounts. These fundamentals, which were articulated in statements such as “sex is the act” and “one means erection”, contrast with the contemplation of other definitions, which are posed as questions or attributed to other people. It is possible that this framing of alternatives allows the men to ‘float’ the ideas before committing to them; when no one responds to the alternative, it is abandoned. Alternatively, it could be a rhetorical device that implies disagreement, for example, “some people would argue” but not me; “some people like to believe” but I don’t. The story of the mate who didn’t have sex because he “pulled out” is met with misunderstanding, disbelief, and ridicule “he's still in there now is he? Walking around all day with his dick up her?”. Within the hegemonic account of heterosex (Gavey et al., 1999; McPhillips et al., 2001), all sex ends with a penis being removed from a vagina (Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999). Once the meaning of the practice is clarified - pulling out prior to ejaculation is a very low-tech contraceptive method - this definition of what is not sex appears to make sense to the men “that’s fair enough”. It appears then that orgasming/ejaculating inside a woman, is deemed not necessary in this precise definition of sex.

In their study with rural Australian teenagers Hillier, Harrison, and Bowditch (1999) found that young men often talked about sex in terms of the physical. Indeed Hillier et al. characterised young men’s descriptions of sex as “physical in the extreme and sex is immediate with little sense of anything else outside the act itself” (p. 83). Moreover, in these young men’s descriptions of sex, women were either completely missing or disembodied. Any sense of consequences or a future beyond the sexual act was also missing. These findings resonate with the accounts presented here and suggest the positioning of sex as physical is not only a feature of young men’s accounts, something reinforced by clinicians working with men experiencing sexual dysfunction (Frachner & Kimmel, 1998; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999).
A common aspect of this account was the characterisation of male sexuality oriented to (physical) satisfaction with little regard to the woman with whom it was satisfied. Here, woman is reduced to object, merely a thing that arouses and then satisfies the male sexual need. This is signalled by the description of woman as “thing” or “it”, as illustrated in the following extracts:

Kevin: So I suppose, that's about it, it's a case of if something came along
(Individual interview - age 43 & widower.)

Malik: Yah I think its got a lot to do with, like how a lot of men see what they want out of their sexual lives at a stage. And they see like ok, I am you know, 18 to 25, that's when I, you know, go out into the world and fuck you know everything that breathes
(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

Brendan: (...) but I know, other guys who do the same thing (...) and, and two particular guys at work (...) that would (...) it doesn't even have to be breathing and they would sleep with it
(Individual interview - age 35 & married.)

Jacob: That ahmm, ahh your sexuality is an exploration, of your connection with, the world, ahmm, (...) and ahmm, which, from a logical possibility point of view, although an extreme one, in the end it means you can have sex with everything (...) whether it moves, alive, dead, whatever
(Individual interview - age 47 & single.)

There are repeated references to ‘breathing’ in the extracts above. For Malik a woman only has to be breathing - alive - for him to be interested in sex with her, for Brendan’s colleagues even this was not necessary - implying they would have sex with a dead woman. Jacob makes this explicit: “alive, dead, whatever”. This is sex as physical at its most extreme, stripped of any relational dimension; the satisfaction of
men’s sexual desire is a physical and seemingly solitary act. For a male sexuality oriented to physical sex then, it would seem that any sex is legitimate; an example of the cultural myth that men are always ready and interested in sex, described by Zilbergeld (1978; 1999). In these accounts, sex is positioned as the penetration of an object, and men’s desire as purely physical. In the following extracts, woman is almost irrelevant, entirely absent as a person, and reduced to a hole - “punani”.

Nigel: yeah men generally won't give a shit where they chop a women ahh as long as they get their end in
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

Malik: Hmmm. The question is, is any ‘punani’ good ‘punani’?
All (laughter)
Malik: Right? Which is what sex is right?
Victor: Is that ‘punani’ worth my time?
(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

In the second extract above, Malik is asking if the men in the group would have any sex that was being offered. The phrase “punani” is slang used by the British television character Ali G, it means vagina. The image evoked by Malik is of a woman making herself available, making her vagina available, for a man to decide if he is interested or not. Arguably, the question posed is not whether to have sex with a particular woman, but with a particular vagina. It is worth noting that there were two women facilitating the focus group that this extract comes from, yet the male participants seem to have little hesitation in reducing woman to “punani” perhaps because it is such a taken for granted positioning.

The reduction of woman to an object of sexual satisfaction commodifies the female body; in the accounts cited here, a woman’s value is limited to her body or vagina. This is what Kippax, Crawford, Waldby, and Benton (1990, p. 538) call woman as

26 Alternatively spelt punanni; according to various fan pages it means ‘female genitalia’ (see for example http://www.boyakasha.co.uk/)
27 It is also interesting to note that in the above discussion I have repeatedly reintroduced ‘woman’ where the men have erased her; a reminder of the relevance of my own subjectivity in the interpretations provided here.
“obliging prop”, with no sexual desire but always receptive (Gilfoyle et al., 1992). Psychiatrist Anthony Clare describes this as masturbatory sexuality: “women in such as scenario become little more than extended sex aids to help men gush their seed” (2001, p. 124). This positioning of woman as sex aid is echoed in one of the representations discussed in the analysis of men’s magazines. In The ultimate man-den (FHM Sept 2002), a Christy Canyon Realistic Vagina attached to a couch, was intended to fulfil men’s sexual needs (see Chapter 5). There it was suggested that this representation constructed male sexuality as uninterested in warmth, connection, emotion or human touch. In the accounts described above, woman is almost interchangeable with the Christy Canyon Realistic Vagina. The reduction of woman to object, the lack of any reference to woman in these extracts, and the discussion of sex in terms of the penetration of a vagina/hole have obvious consequences for women in sexual relationship with men. Chiefly, the silencing of women’s voices in sexual encounters (J. Crawford et al., 1994) and the denial of an active female sexuality (Fine, 1988; Tolman, 1991).

The function of this account, where women are reduced to object, is more complicated. Those exploring the objectification of women, often in pornography, have suggested it is an indication of man’s inherent hatred of woman (see for example Dworkin, 1980; Jukes, 1993). Others working within psychoanalytic perspectives, suggest it is indicative of man’s fear, indeed dread, of woman (Horney, 1973); if woman is reduced to object then there is nothing to fear from her (Ussher, 1997b). This interpretation is based on the notion that it is through sexual intercourse that a man’s masculinity and heterosexuality is affirmed (Frosh, 1995; Segal, 1990) - “sex is the way we prove our masculinity”(Seidler, 1989, p. 23). That is, to be man, one must act sexually (Ussher, 1997b). However, women are both the object of this performance of phallic sexuality and the judges of it, such that “for many men it [sexual intercourse] confirms a sense of ineptness and failure: the failure to satisfy women” (Segal, 1990, p. 212).

The expectation that men are both responsible for women’s sexual satisfaction and less of a man if they fail to achieve this - or at the very least failing if they do not try - was demonstrated in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5). Various representations articulated both the importance of women’s sexual satisfaction and
the need to confirm it - for the example through the visible confirmation of her orgasm: “You only have to look at her to see she’s well and truly serviced - her limbs floppy and relaxed, her expression drowsy and dreamy” (Sex explained. The sex miracle (FHM Jun 2002)). Or more desperately, by giving her a customer satisfaction survey as in FHM’s one-night stand test (FHM Oct 2002). Similarly, clinicians working with men experiencing erectile dysfunction, note that this is often experienced as “catastrophic” (Frachner & Kimmel, 1998, p. 464), the “ultimate collapse of his manhood” (p. 463). For as Ethel Spector Person observes, “genital sexual activity is a prominent feature in the maintenance of masculine gender […] Thus an impotent man always feels that his masculinity, and not just his sexuality, is threatened” (Person, 1980, p. 619). The reduction of woman to object, then, can be read as a way to reduce the threat that she represents. In taking up this account, men suppress the signification of sex as an interaction between two people, and by silencing the other (woman) they protect themselves against the vulnerabilities that a close relationship produces (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994; for a thorough examination of this argument see Hollway, 1984; Hollway, 1984, 1998).

There are however potentially negative consequences for the men who take up this account. The framing of male sexuality as performance, and of women’s sexual satisfaction as the measure of this, is reinforced, with all the problems and anxieties that this performance oriented account engenders (Frachner & Kimmel, 1998; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999). Moreover, it precludes the possibility of experiencing a close supportive and accepting relationship (Seidler, 1989).
Men’s sexuality as different to women’s sexuality

Heterosexual men would be as likely as homosexual men to have sex most often with strangers, to participate in anonymous orgies in public baths, and stop off in public restrooms for five minutes of fellatio on the way home from work if women were interested in these activities. (Donald Symons, evolutionary anthropologist quoted by Bailey, 2003, p. 90)

A third truth of male sexuality was that it was positioned as different to women’s sexuality. The construal of male sexuality as physically oriented (as discussed above) and woman as emotionally oriented was an important aspect of this. These differences were construed in two different ways: as determined by bodily differences or social constraints. Regardless of the explanation, male sexuality was unquestionably the standard, often being positioned as more natural, more honest, and less constrained than woman’s. Further, the male sexuality described here was represented as universal.

Corporeal architecture

In response to a question about whether women’s experience of sex and sexuality was different to men’s, posed in the semi-structured individual and group interviews, most men produced a similar account. A common feature in these accounts was the positioning of men’s sexuality as physical and women’s as other (emotional, spiritual, mystical, deep, meaningful). This echoes the separation of the physical (sex) from everything else (sexuality) described above. These differences were often described as being due to what Gavey, McPhillips, and Braun (1999) call corporeal architecture; that is, physical differences in male and female bodies determine both the meaning and the experience of sex for men and women. Further, the characteristics construed as belonging to women - because of these differences - were positioned as not applying to men.
Jarrod: I think they would say it would be a lot more intimate for a woman, you're taking someone into your body, you're not giving something to someone
All: (laughter)
Jarrod: you know what I mean? More uhh
Nigel: that's what I said that with women you have try to get into their head first, so yeah it’s more deep and meaningful

(Individual interview - age 47 & single.)

In the extract above, Jarrod characterises women’s experience of sex as more intimate, deep and meaningful than men’s. All three extracts refer to women taking someone into their body. Steven evokes a notion of women having sex from the inside and men from the outside; this is construed as producing different experiences of sex. This is a reversal of the usual spatial metaphors applied to men and women, where man is associated with the mind (interior) and woman the body (exterior) (Potts, 2002). Potts suggests man’s sexual subjectivity is associated with exteriority
because of his visible penis, and woman with interiority because of the invisibility of her reproductive organs. Jacob takes the same metaphor further, such that these bodily differences delimit what is possible for men and women: women physically experience sex as envelopment, which means they can move beyond pleasure and the physical to a mystical appreciation. In each extract, the practice of sex is limited to the genitals. Moreover, it is clear that intercourse is being discussed, though this was not part of the interviewer’s questions. This again reinforces the centrality of intercourse in this account of male sexuality.

Social-historical-political constraints on women’s sexuality

An alternative account of the differences between men and women was that women’s sexuality was subject to, regulated by, social, historical or political forces.

Malik: Though they [men] might be a lot more honest because they have you know, historically speaking, they like in terms of like masculinity, they have a lot more behind them when they say, I want sex and that is all I want thank you very much. But then women, you know, they are bogged down by this you know, historical image of women being subservient to man and you know at these incumbent ideas

(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

In the extract above, Malik assumes an essentialist model of sexuality. Women are positioned as having been prevented from expressing their (natural/inherent) sexuality, whilst men have not. Free from constraints, men seek sex; by implication therefore, women would assert the same desire for responsibility free sex if they were less constrained. A few other men gave similar accounts, drawing on notions of social, political or structural restrictions on women’s sexuality. Implicit in these accounts is the permissive discourse (Hollway, 1989), which suggests sexuality has the right to be expressed, regardless of gender. Common to all, was a positioning of

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28 In interviews with women Nicholson and Burr (2003) reported a similar kind of characterisation; women’s sexuality and experience of sex was more diffuse, sensual - broader than just an orgasm (as it was often characterised for men).
men as not subject to these restrictions - the desires men express are pure and unhindered by the social.

This characterisation of male and female sexuality as different is also evident in sexological discourses. For example, Masters and Johnson argued that whilst women had a greater capacity for sexual response, their drive for sex was curbed by women’s “significantly greater susceptibility to negatively based psychosocial influences” (Masters & Johnson, 1970, p. 220; as cited by Potts, 1999). Mary Boyle (1993) identifies similar descriptions in Alex Comfort’s *The joy of sex* (1972) and Helen Kaplan’s *New sex therapy* (1978). This is part of a more general perception in sexology that women are easily turned off, or put off sex, and more vulnerable to “psychological and situational aspects” (Boyle, 1993, p. 213). The representation of women’s sexuality as inherently problematic was common in the men’s magazines, suggesting it is prevalent beyond the domain of sexology (Chapter 5). Boyle suggests one consequence of this positioning of male sexuality as unaffected by psychological and situational aspects, is the notion that men will sexually respond to “almost any woman in the same way” (Boyle, 1993, p. 213); something that both draws on, and reinforces, the sex as physical truth discussed earlier where woman was reduced to an object that precipitates and satisfies the male sexual drive. Further, it characterises all sex as the same - an emphatically physical and bodily experience; this was a common characterisation in the sexual dysfunction research reviewed in Chapter 2.

There are two points to make about this positioning of male and female sexuality. Firstly, male sexuality is deemed to be the norm as it is the pure expression of a sexual drive. Secondly, only women are positioned as being vulnerable to social, historical, political constraint. Whether the explanation for the difference was corporeal architecture or external forces, all of these accounts constructed a natural driven active male sexuality that experienced sex as physical and external - outside the body. For women, on the other hand, sex was emotional, mental, thinking, complex, mysterious, and experienced as inside - bodies or minds.
Men’s difficulties talking about women’s sexuality

That the men in this study appeared to have trouble talking about women’s experience of sexuality, is of note. This was evident in the expression of a lack of knowledge - “no fucken idea”; the positioning of their opinion as not authoritative - “I can't say that I can speak authoritatively at all”, “couldn't absolutely say for sure”, “apparently”, “you read”, “I don’t run the program”; and the reliance on the media, and popular culture.

Kevin: so I don't try to say that I know what women think, feel or expect (...) in so far as, ahmm, I don't have, I don't run the program for it ahmm, sorry, how was the question worded again?

(Individual interview - age 43 & widower.)

There appeared to be some anxiety associated with saying what women’s experience of sexuality was; the earlier extracts from Steven and Jacob are a good example of this. Much talk around this issue was hesitant, with many pauses and false starts, and for Kevin, above, resulted in a short-term memory loss. This may reflect the limited discourses available for the articulation of female sexuality, especially in relation to an active female desire (Cairns, 1993; Fine, 1988; Gavey et al., 1999; Tolman, 1991). The knowledge men did articulate, was often distanced from them, with references to women’s magazines as sources of knowledge. None of the men positioned their responses as coming from personal experiences, nor did they mention discussions with a partner or even female friends. This is a little surprising given how often men reported discussing sex with their partners in the survey study discussed in the Chapter 8 (the most common response was ‘weekly’). This may suggest that it is not the woman’s experience of sex, her desires and sexual dis/likes, which are being discussed.

One way of interpreting this finding is in relation to the discourse around male sexual skill discussed in Chapter 3 and in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5). A discourse of skill positions man as expert, such that a man seeking knowledge from a woman undermines his positioning as skilled and knowledgeable (Flood, 2001a,
2001b; Waldby et al., 1993). Indeed, the magazine representations drawing on this discourse often positioned women as ignorant, and so not a useful source of knowledge about their own sexuality (see particularly, *Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom - the master craftsman’s guide to sex* (Men’s Health Oct 2001) discussed in Chapter 5). This suggests it would be unlikely that men positioned within this discourse would seek out opportunities for discussion of women’s experiences of sex, beyond perhaps the confirmation of orgasm. Perhaps more importantly what is privileged within the skilful discourse is the acquisition of an abstract set of skills that can be applied to any woman/body to produce an orgasm; thus, the subjective experience of an individual woman becomes irrelevant. Related to this, is the finding reported by Waldby, Kippax, and Crawford (1993), that men only established a dialogue around sex when there was an enduring problem, a ‘failure of technique’; that is, when the woman failed to respond in the way anticipated by the man.

**Controlling the sex drive and the sexual body**

Self control, mastery of nature and of our ‘nature’, is a defining marker of the masculine state. Consequently, when the repressed returns, when for example the body makes it mark through sex, it is experienced as a failure, a dangerous act of giving in to the bestial elements in our makeup. (Frosh, 1995, p. 227)

The final truth of male sexuality was strongly connected to the notion of a male sexual drive, and how this drive acts through the body, which men need to control. This was a feature of a number of the extracts cited in the first truth, where the notion that men want sex/more sex was discussed. In particular, the build up and relief accounts often contained an assumption that men should maintain control over their need for a sexual outlet, even where that resulted in frustration; for many this was associated with expectations of monogamy. This truth is also implicated in the notion of sexual skill where men need to control their drive in order to provide women with sexual pleasure, for example by delaying ejaculation during intercourse (see Chapters 3 and 5). This truth was also apparent in the discourse of compromise discussed in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5); this discourse assumed a driven male
sexuality but framed this as something that needed to be regulated to meet the 
expectations of society, and the conventions of a monogamous relationship.

Controlling the sex drive

The central characteristic of this truth was an articulation of the need to exert control over the sex drive; an insistent urgent drive that is produced by men’s positioning within the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1984). In the following extract, which was discussed earlier in relation to the evocation of the reproductive imperative, men describe a natural inherent drive to “spread the seed” which needs to be controlled to meet social conventions.

Jack: all it comes down to it is, but (...) it's the mental capacity of that male (...) 
Matt: That is true 
Jack: (...) how intelligent and how fucking (...) open-minded they are to be able to say, 'okay, maybe that maybe isn't the way to go, because we're humans, we're not bulls and heifers here’ 
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

A number of binaries were evoked in accounts of control of the sexual drive, some of which are evident in the extract above: mind-body, human-animal, thought-action. A strong mind, intelligence, self-discipline, and reflexive thought, are required to rein in the animal - what Stephen Frosh, in the quote at the beginning of this section, called “the bestial elements in our makeup”. The evocation of, and differentiation from, the animal, “we’re human, we’re not bulls and heifers”, suggests that if men do not exercise control over their sexual drive they will lose their humanity. A number of writers, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, have argued that the experience of sexual desire can be an overwhelming one for men, exposing their vulnerability, a desire for dependence, and their failure to suppress these desires (Frosh, 1995; Segal, 1990; Seidler, 1989); these desires undermine a hegemonic masculinity that privileges independence, self-control and dominance (Clare, 2001). Thus, it is perhaps not only a loss of humanity that Jack warns against, but also a loss of a particular kind of humanity - a rational, civilised masculine humanity. This is
arguably the same fear that is evident in Matt’s comment, “I often find it hard to think when I’ve got a heavy boner”. Demonstrating a struggle for control - the overwhelming experience of the embodied sexual drive, and the threat this poses to the mind - Matt suggests that his sexual drive threatens that most important principle of masculinity, his rationality (Frosh, 1994, 1995).

In many accounts of the need for control over the sexual drive, there was the sense that if control were lost the man would find himself doing something socially or morally transgressive or simply not what he wanted. The same theme is evident in accounts of sexual violence, where men are positioned as having lost their self-control (Lees, 1997b). Indeed, it was often evoked in the recent public discussions around a number of sex scandals involving Australian sportsmen. This truth then, often represented the appearance of an external social force in a largely biological embodied account of male sexuality. This is illustrated in the extracts below, where both men suggest that not having control over sexual needs leads to trouble.

Fred: and ahh (...) I'm, masturbating in the, in the shower (I: Hmm) and ahh, getting myself off that way. (...) I have been to a couple of ladies (I: Hmm) and paid for their services (...) and ahh, do, just try and keep myself (...) ahh (...) not available but (...) controlled because I have felt urges where I've, I've wanted to walk up to another lady and really kiss her and cuddle her and (...) and take her to bed (I: Hmm) (...) and ahh, I just don't want to do that, (...) I: why
Fred: because I know the implications that can come from it (I: yeah) (...) yeah (...) so I used to be a TAFE teacher, (...) and with all the sexual discrimination laws and everything else in place, I have to be very, very careful on what I said, what I did, at work. (Individual interview - age 63 & married.)
Kevin: ahmm, so as far as sexual needs go, yes, I'm, I'm a man, ahmm (…) where, they're there but ahmm, I'm also forty-three, so I'm a bit more controlled obviously, so, ahmm, I don't let them dominate
[…]
Kevin: ahmm (…) so as sexual urges go ahmm (…) been there done that (…) don't mind doing it again. But, ahmm (…) I stopped letting it dominate. (…) It gets you into too much trouble. (laughs) (…)
(Individual interview - age 43 & widower.)

The extracts above from Kevin and Fred, feature the same separation of the sexual drive - signifying the body, nature, loss of control, and will - signifying the mind, reason, the site of control. For example, Kevin separates himself “I” from his sexual needs “them” and “it”, such that “I don’t let them dominate” and “I stopped letting it dominate”. Both men draw on what Annie Potts describes as the paradoxical characterisation of male sexuality: on one hand, healthy male sexuality is characterised as control over the body and yet on the other hand, male sexuality is also always “potentially uncontrollable” in that it is inherently driven by biological urges (2002, p. 140). Thus, it is the male sexual drive which both makes Kevin recognisable as a man and which creates a need for control, the loss of which threatens his masculinity and yet paradoxically confirms it. This same paradox is evident in the next extract. Ramu rarely sees his partner as she lives overseas, and their visits are always held in secret as her parents disapprove of their relationship.

I: Okay (…) do you have any concerns about sex or about your sexuality
Ramu: I'm very scared at times (…) in terms of performance, like, you know, anxiety (I: Hmm) like, when you don't see your partner for two years and you see them, you, you know, there's so much of a performance pressure and anxiety and (…) like. Ahmm, if you were comfortable, I'll tell you this. Like (…) I have tried attempting sexual intercourse and, ahh, I think, I didn't give her enough time to sort of cum now too, because I was at a different level, she was different, so there I think she found it painful, and being able to, sort of, discontinue the ahh, intercourse and sort of, had to leave it at that, and then I was catching a flight that night, so (laughter), yeah, it was really
difficult so, that, that’s a failed attempt and that puts a lot of. And I come back and think, you know, the fault is mine, I could have (...) comforted her emotionally, and, relaxed her a bit, and I could have done a bit of foreplay. But at that point in time you're not thinking with your rational mind, you're thinking with your emotional mind (I: Hmm) And all you're thinking about is, sex, I, for, I do know for, it may be different for a woman, for a girl, I don't know, but for a bloke, (...) you know, you don't want to be wasting time on conversation, or, yeah, yeah

(Individual interview - age 32 & de facto.)

In this account, Ramu repeatedly evokes the sexual skill discourse: he positions himself as responsible for sex and for his partner’s sexual experience, thus his attempt at intercourse fails because he fails in his responsibility by allowing his sexual drive to dominate, to get ahead of her arousal. He recounts all of the practices he should have enacted: “foreplay”, “comforted her emotionally”, “relaxed her” and “give her enough time”. The reason for the failure was his loss of control - “the fault is mine”. His characterisation of himself as scared, anxious and pressured, reinforces the sense of a man failing to control himself - his feelings, his fears and his body. There is the familiar positioning of man as unproblematically desiring sex, and even though he talks of his performance anxiety, the focus in the sexual encounter is on the reassurance and comforting she needs from him. There is the complementary positioning of his partner as needing considerable work to arouse her sexual interest, to ready her for intercourse. Indeed the woman is completely silent in this account. He is responsible for her sexual experience, arousal, and pleasure. He should have done a bit of foreplay, comforted her, and relaxed her before he attempted intercourse. He thinks it was painful for her, that she was not ready, that she understands; there is no suggestion that they discussed it. There is no sense of this woman as an active subject in this account, nor of sex as a shared experience.

For Ramu, the failure was in not maintaining control over his sex drive; he is thinking about sex and not about his partner. However, his final assertion reframes the account such that her needs got in the way of his sexual desire. He belittles her desires, “you don't want to be wasting time on conversation”, and by using the universalising “blokes” rather than “I” aligns himself with hegemonic notions of
male sexuality. The effect of this final statement is to alleviate the possible negative effects of his loss of control, and threat to his masculinity; he failed to achieve intercourse but it is clear that the fault is hers. The good man should control his sexuality. However, it is an urgent driven sexuality that sometimes will prevail. That is, the loss of control proves Ramu’s masculinity, where the failure to complete intercourse threatened to undermine it. This is an example of an intersection of the male sex drive and male sexual skill discourses; where the driven male sexuality prevails.

Controlling the sexual body

In interviews with heterosexual men, Potts (2001; 2002) found not only a splitting of the body and the mind - evident in most of the extracts cited here - but of man from his penis. The penis was repeatedly described not only as external to the man, as separate to him, but was often granted interiority - a mind of its own. Potts draws on cultural material and interviews to demonstrate the attribution of a mind or will to the penis, such that a battle ensues between man (the self-mind) and his penis (the self-penis). We can see this in the last extract in the previous section, where Ramu describes “you’re not thinking with your rational mind, you’re thinking with your emotional mind”; or in Potts’ terminology, the self-mind loses control of the self-penis. In the separation of mind and body, and man and penis, articulated in these extracts, the man “who now relinquishes control to his other person(ality), is, conveniently perhaps, removed from responsibility for his actions, which are after all, the actions of his penis-body” (Potts, 2002, p. 110).

The separation of man and body - often of man and penis - was a common feature in men’s talk around control of the sexual body, though men tended to focus on the loss of control, as in the next extract.

Will: but, um, also, worse thing, is if, like, basically thinking about a chick that's unbelievably hot, saying 'fuck I'd like to be with her', you know her and getting there and just blowing your load five seconds into it
All: (long loud laughter)
Robbie: Poor form man, poor form
Matt: There's nothing worse than trying to make it last, stick it in and going ohhh shit
Unknown: Here we go
All: (talking over each other)
Matt: Yeah, yeah, exactly you try and stop it, (inaudible) but it doesn't.
All: (long loud laughter)
Matt: C'mon man, it's very true

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

In this extract from a group interview, Will and Matt talk about coming too quickly during a sexual encounter with a woman. This is an example of the failure of the mind to control the body - “trying to make it last” and “you try and stop it”. Unlike erectile dysfunction which is associated with being unable to get an erection, premature ejaculation is a case of mistiming (Potts, 2000); a man’s ability to get an erection is beyond question. Zilbergeld defines premature ejaculation as a “lack of ejaculatory control” (1978, p. 214), something echoed by the young men who describe not being able to stop ejaculation, and a kind of resignation, “ohh shit…here we go”, as they feel control slipping away. When women’s sexual satisfaction - that is orgasm - was of little concern, how long a man lasted before ejaculating was irrelevant (Zilbergeld, 1978). Alfred Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) reported that 75% of men ejaculated within two minutes of beginning intercourse, something that was not considered problematic 50 years ago, let alone indicative of dysfunction (Zilbergeld, 1978). It is the shift in orientation to women’s sexual pleasure as important, and within the sexual skill discourse as indicative of a man’s performance and so masculinity, that problematises a lack of control over the timing of ejaculation.

What is important here is the notion that men should be able to control ejaculation - control their body, or more precisely their “temperamental penis” (Paley, 1999, p. 199). Control of the male sexual drive was a feature of many representations identified in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5). In particular, the male sexual skill discourse required men control their sexual drive, and how it acts through the sexual body, in order to allow their partner to come to her “elusive, labour-intensive orgasm” (Sex explained. The sex miracle (FHM Jun 2002)). In the
following extracts from *FHM* and *Men’s Health*, men are encouraged to delay ejaculation:

Concentrate on her pleasure first (if she’s not enjoying herself, you won’t either) and on techniques that delay ejaculation.

*(Some enchanted evening…how to have a one-night stand without making a complete mess of things. (Men’s Health Dec 2001))*

From what I hear, guys are just interested in getting on, getting in and getting off. And seduction, foreplay - it’s an area that’s often neglected

*(The gigolo (FHM Aug 2002))*

Gives you control over your sexual technique…you’ll feel an increased awareness of the impending orgasm, so you’ll have more time to decide to follow through or back off.

*(The good sex workout (Men’s Health Sept 2001))*

In these magazine extracts, there is the expectation that men both can and should exert control over their sexual body. The distancing from the experience of sex and from the body advocated by these extracts, what Frachner and Kimmel (1998) call self-objectification, frames the body as a sexual machine with man as operator. These extracts also encourage men to undertake self-surveillance, so they are aware when their orgasm is impending and can make a rational decision to allow it or not. It has been suggested that excessive self focus during sex, what Masters and Johnson (1970) called ‘spectatoring’, is a significant factor in sexual dysfunction, in particular contributing to performance anxiety (Tiefer, 1986). This notion of a man detached from the sexual interaction, monitoring his sexual performance and the responses of his sexual partner, applying strategies to ensure the encounter progresses as required, evokes Foucault’s (1979a) notion of disciplinary power. The self-regulating male subject observes his sexual practice and conforms to cultural norms - in this case, that men give women an orgasm by postponing their own.

A number of authors have suggested that the inability to get or maintain an erection is a deeply humiliating experience for a man; the loss of control over the body
signalling a loss of manhood (Doyle, 1983; Frachner & Kimmel, 1998; Person, 1980; Segal, 1990; Tiefer, 1986). Potts (2001; 2002) argues that this is due to the phallocentric construction of healthy male sexuality as oriented to penetrative intercourse, where a penis firm enough for the penetration of a vagina is vital. It was very rare for men in this interview study to talk about erectile difficulties. One example occurred at the end of a group interview when the men were asked if it would have been a different experience to be interviewed by a woman.

Jack: It's not right to have a female where you're having a conversation about fucking going limp.
Will: You don't want a girl knowing your sexual secrets.
Jack: You know, going limp, you just don't sit there and say that shit. Because even though you're never going to see her again, you know that in her head, she just looked at you and it's knowledge that you are, you have are, you have gone (...) even though, even though everyone has had it, it happens to everybody.
Hassad: She knows for sure.
Jack: She knows that for sure it has happened to you.
Matt: You've had the softie.
Jack: You've had the (...)
Will: The soft dick
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

This is the same group who earlier discussed premature ejaculation; this was the only interview with a male interviewer. With the exception of one individual interview, the lack of talk about erectile difficulties may bear out the reluctance to tell a woman interviewer about “going limp”\(^{29}\). The men in this extract are concerned that a woman will have knowledge about them if they reveal they lost an erection during sex; however, this knowledge is more than just that they lost an erection, it reveals something about them as men. It is the notion that sexuality reveals the truth about each individual (Frosh, 1995) that is being articulated here; if masculinity is expressed through sexuality (Frachner & Kimmel, 1998) then what does this failure

\(^{29}\) Though erectile difficulties were not raised as a specific issue in the interviews, so this is a silence worth noting rather than something men refused to talk about.
of sexuality, where sexuality is constructed around the penis and its performance, say about a man’s masculinity? Potts offers one answer: “the synecdochal substitution of penis for man determines the consequences of such nonerection. The loss of the penis-body’s power to pierce and thrust extends to the entire male-body, disabling him, de-sexing him, and submitting him to powerlessness-to ‘impotence’” (Potts, 2000, p. 94). The importance of control over the sexual body, the mastery referred to by Frosh at the opening of this section, means that a ‘soft dick’ where a hard one is desired, is a failure of masculinity.

Within this final truth of male sexuality then, “sex is both dangerously ‘basic’ and also somehow external - not part of what defines the man as ‘man’, as that advanced creature of rational mastery. Sex is always there, an obsession, but it is not part of us; being repudiated and repressed, it paradoxically threatens to take control” (Frosh, 1995, p. 227).

6.3. Discussion

According to Bronwyn Davies, the post-structuralist project allows “us to see the subject’s fictionality, while recognising how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real” (1997, p. 272). The analysis presented in this chapter took up a critical position to examine these fictions.

In the previous chapter, the emphasis was on the representations and discourses around male sexuality in magazines; in the current chapter, the emphasis was on representations in individual and group interviews. The hegemonic truths set out in this analysis, constitute the primary knowledge through which men have come to recognise themselves as hetero-sexual male subjects within the hegemonic account of male sexuality. Moreover, they act as ways for men to recognise, judge, understand and experience themselves as sexual subjects (Rose, 1996). The truths described above characterize a limited and often contradictory account of male sexuality. In the analysis, links were drawn between the four hegemonic truths, and the discourses and representations identified in the preceding analysis of representations in men’s magazines, and to previous discursive analyses (described
in Chapter 3). Moreover, some speculations on the implications of these truths for men’s experience of sex were made. It is not necessary to revisit this here; however, a brief summary of the truths is useful.

Men want sex/more sex: again, the foremost truth was that men simply and enduring want sex, a clear evocation of the male sex drive discourse. Across age and relationship contexts, men want more of it. There was the repeated suggestion that men were not having enough sex, which was often quantified - either as a specific amount of sex or as a general desire for regularity. Men often drew on a biological account to explain their drive for sex - physiological needs, which produced a coital imperative. Within this construction, the denial of sex was a serious matter, threatening men’s survival or health. Throughout this truth, women were repeatedly positioned as denying men sex, something that constitutes sexual relations as a battle, echoing the framing in *FHM*. A reproductive imperative was also evoked in this truth, as an explanation of why men want sex; this naturalised both men’s desire for sex and intercourse as the central and most natural sexual practice.

Allied to the previous truth of men wanting sex, was the framing of sex as a physical experience for men. Within this truth, sex was a physical act, the satisfaction gained was physical, and everything else - emotion, connection, relating and meaning - was categorised as sexuality. Thus within this truth, the meaning of sex was limited to the physical, the body and often only to the genitals; a framing that silences the relational dimensions of sex. Because of the emphasis on sex as a physical experience, women were largely irrelevant in this account, the focus being not on an individual woman but on woman as an object of sexual satisfaction. It was suggested that within the male sexual skill discourse women become the judges of man’s performance - her sexual satisfaction being his goal, a positioning that is potentially threatening for men. The reduction of woman to object, and indeed her occasional erasure from sex, in these accounts arguably served to reduce this threat.

The third truth reinscribed gender differences in the experience of sexuality. Men experienced sex as physical and superficial, for women it was a deeper emotional experience; these differences were determined by physiological differences in the bodies of men and women. Sex was defined by intercourse and it was this practise
that was drawn on to explain why bodily differences might produce different experience. Thus, woman passively takes another into her body, and man actively enters/penetrates. An alternative explanation for differences were social and political constraints on women (of which men have apparently been free). This framing constructed male sexuality as the pure expression of a physiological drive.

The final truth was around control - control of the sexual drive and the sexual body. Within in this truth men need to exercise control over the sexual drive, drawing on the discourse of compromise discussed in the previous chapter. If men lost control they would find themselves transgressing social conventions; they would do what they did not want to do. This truth repeatedly drew on the paradoxical characterisation of male sexuality as control over the body/drive and simultaneously uncontrollable. A crucial aspect of this truth was the control men needed to exert over their bodies, and often specifically their penis, a position that draws on the sexual skill discourse discussed previously. The descriptions of the loss of an erection or of the failure to control the male body in intercourse were failures, men’s failure. There was the repeated characterisation of man as separate to his body/penis: in failing to control the sexual drive or the sexual body the mind had failed to exert control over the body. The framing of control as a central characteristic in masculinity, and the implications for the experience of sex, were discussed. Specifically, that the loss of control threatens masculinity.

Cautions about the status of any account produced through discursive examination that were aired in the preceding chapter also apply to the analysis undertaken here. It is worth briefly restating however that every reading is “always located - it always comes from some ‘position’ and is, therefore, always-already incomplete” (Stenner, 1993, p. 130). Moreover, the four truths presented here are not exhaustive of the regimes of knowledge that constitute the conditions of possibility for heterosexual male sexualities. Rather they are framed as the taken for granted truths of a hegemonic account of heterosexual male sexuality which appeared in the accounts of men in this study. Finally, as has been reiterated a number of times, discourses are not static, they are shifting - across geographical, historical, and cultural locations. Thus, the accounts produced in the interviews, and reproduced in the analysis above, are in part constrained and enabled by these contexts.
6.4. Summary

The account of male sexuality presented here, which is highly consistent and taken for granted, constitutes the conditions of possibility for a male hetero-sexual subjectivity. The negotiation of these truths, how men take them up in the accounts they produce, the dilemmas, conflicts and ambivalences men experience in this process, are explored in the following chapter.

Central to this thesis is the contention that men draw on cultural resources, including representations, to give meaning to their sexuality and sexual experiences. This is not a straightforward relationship however, as the analyses in this and the previous chapter have demonstrated; men must negotiate a plethora of competing representations. The analysis of the cultural representations of male sexuality in cultural material and men’s accounts, provides the sociocultural context in which an analysis of men’s experiences of their sexuality, and hence negotiation of these representations, can take place. This is the focus of the following two chapters.
CHAPTER 7. The Practices of Subjectification

Practices of subjectification; that is, the processes through which we are subjected, and actively take up as our own the terms of our subjection.

(Davies et al., 2001, p. 167)

The previous chapter described the taken for granted truths of heterosexual male sexuality in the accounts of urban Australian men. This chapter explores the “practices of subjectification”: how men negotiated these truths of hegemonic male sexuality in order to become, and remain, recognisable as hetero-sexual male subjects. A detailed analysis is undertaken which traces the subject positions that are taken up and maintained, how participants deal with the conflicts or difficulties created by these subject positions, and how group participants regulate each other’s subjectivities in interview contexts. Therefore, this chapter specifically addresses the second research question: how are different ways of understanding heterosexual male sexuality taken up and resisted by individual men to give meaning to their experience of themselves, their bodies, their desires and their relations with women? It also begins to address the third research question: what are the consequences of the different ways of understanding sex and sexuality for men?

Much work on subjectification builds on Foucault’s project to produce a genealogy of the self: “a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (Foucault, 1983, p. 208-209). This work highlights the historical and cultural specificity of what it means to be human. Recent writings have focused on the role of the ‘psy’ disciplines in “the invention of a certain way of
understanding and relating to ourselves and others, to the making of human being intelligible and practicable under a certain description” (Rose, 1996, p. 2; See also Walkerdine, 1989). Other work has focused on particular kinds of subjectivities and the process of subjectification. For example: schoolgirls (Davies et al., 2001; Walkerdine, 1990); good and ‘behaviourally disturbed’ students (C. Laws & Davies, 2000); young working class girls (Walkerdine, 1997); men and women with HIV/AIDS (Bartos & McDonald, 2000); and women with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (Ussher, 2003). The current research follows this latter focus, exploring the process of subjectification in relation to heterosexual male sexual subjectivity.

There is little research examining heterosexual men’s sexual subjectification, though there is some related work examining young heterosexual men and women’s (gendered) subjectivities (for example L. Allen, 2003a; L. Allen, 2003b; Chambers et al., 2004; Kehily, 2001; Renold, 2003)30. Louisa Allen’s research with 17-19 year old men in New Zealand has demonstrated how men construct a gendered subjectivity in particular ways in order to “establish themselves publicly as ‘appropriately’ masculine within/through the realm of (hetero)sexuality” (2003a, p. 226). Emma Renold’s research with much younger men - 10-11 years olds in the UK - demonstrates how “being a ‘proper boy’ involves establishing or at least investing in and projecting a recognisable (and hegemonic) heterosexual identity” (2003, p. 190). Much of this research examines how young men regulate each other’s subjectivity, for example, Allen uses group interviews to show how men both regulate others’ subjectivity and create spaces for resisting hegemonic discourses. The focus in this body of work is on how young men produced themselves as men, as appropriately masculine, through the practices of sexuality. The current analysis however, focuses more closely on how men make themselves appropriately heterosexual within the hegemonic truths - the conditions of possibility - outlined in the previous chapter.

Research on subjectification is situated within a post-structuralist framework (see Chapter 3) and as such theorises a subject that is not outside or prior to language, but is an effect of discursive and cultural practices. The subject “only exists as process; it

30 It is important to acknowledge that not all of these authors would describe their work in this way; however, the articles cited all explored how individuals produced themselves as appropriate subjects within dominant discourses.
is revised and (re)presented through images, metaphors, storylines and other features of language” (Davies, 1997, p. 275), and as such, subjectivity is “precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak” (Weedon, 1987, 1997, p. 33). The current analysis explores this process in terms of male hetero-sexual subjection; the work heterosexual men do, and must continue to do, to maintain their subjecthood. Specifically the practices they must enact, the meanings and knowledges they must reproduce, and the mastery they must gain of their body, feelings and desires to demonstrate themselves to be competent appropriate subjects within the regimes of truth that determine what counts as hetero-sexual man. An important feature of this is to provide an account of the contradictions, dilemmas, ambivalences and struggles men face in this complex process. To this end, a more detailed case analysis is undertaken on a number of individual men’s (or group’s) narratives, this sometimes involves exploring more than one extract to examine how a particular theme (or truth) has been negotiated throughout an interview.

A note about terminology; the focus of this analysis is heterosexual male sexual subjectivity and heterosexual male sexual subjecthood. These are rather wordy and awkward phrases and can interrupt readability. In the following analysis, it should be assumed that it is ‘heterosexual’ that is being referred to when the terms men/man or male sexuality are used. Further, where it seems necessary to highlight ‘heterosexual’, the phrase hetero-sexual is used to reinforce the sexual aspects of this construct.

7.1. Methodology

This analysis builds on that presented in the previous chapter; a separate discussion of participants, methodology and analytic strategy will not be undertaken. There are however three notable differences worth mentioning. Firstly, in contrast to the analysis in Chapter 6, specific themes identified by the detailed coding frame (see Table C.2, Appendix C.2) are analysed; specifically, sex as commodity, lack of sex, and just sex. Secondly, there is greater emphasis in this analysis on the ways in which men take up positions in relation to others in the interview; this applies
equally to the group interviews and individual interviews where the interviewer or the other group members are the ‘other’. The most relevant differences between group and individual interviews, in this analysis, are the contexts in which men are (re)producing themselves as recognisable subjects. Therefore, it is often in the transcripts from group interviews that particular attention is paid to the conflicts, challenges, and resistances men face/experience when undertaking this work - (re)producing themselves as recognisable - in relation to other men. Finally, extracts from the data that has been analysed are included as examples of the themes under discussion. Because this analysis is concerned with negotiation, longer extracts are often included, than in the previous chapter.

7.2. The project of subjectification

In order to demonstrate how men take up the hegemonic truths discussed in the previous section, three themes that emerged from the interviews are explored: sex as commodity, accounting for the lack of sex, regulating the meaning of sex. This analysis pays particular attention to how men in different contexts take up the same set of hegemonic truths about male sexuality. The men interviewed come from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and represent a broad range of ages (see demographic information in Chapter 4 and 6). However, the focus in this analysis is on relationship context. Men provided accounts of current and previous relationships, as well as of their experiences whilst single and casually dating. Thus, it is important to be aware of the context in which men are working to construct and maintain their subjecthood as ‘hetero-sexual man’. The first theme - sex as commodity - was evident in all of the interviews and across relationship contexts, although the practices associated with it varied. The second theme - accounting for the lack of sex - focuses on men in relationships. The third theme - regulating the meaning of sex - concentrates on single men and their accounts of sex with casual partners.
**Sex as commodity: Becoming recognisable as ‘hetero-sexual man’**

Everywhere sex is understood to be something females have that males want (Symons, 1979, p. 253)

Jim: in order to ahmm (…) to have sex with a girl you've got to please her
(Individual interview - age 35 & single.)

As demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, to be a hetero-sexual man means to both want and to have sex. A significant amount of the talk during the interviews was around the work men have to do to gain access to sex. Sex was objectified in these accounts, a thing that men got from women, in return for giving women something they wanted. Within this account, men undertook various practices to give women what they demanded (as understood within the regimes of truth that constitute female sexual subjectivity). As such, acquiring and mastering the appropriate practices of male sexuality was an important part of becoming an appropriate hetero-sexual male subject. In the narratives below men provide evidence of their mastery of various practices - buying drinks; paying for taxis; showing an interest/getting to know a woman; financial and emotional support; sex related practices like understanding women’s sexuality, buying sex toys, giving sexual pleasure. Further, in these accounts women are positioned as knowing participants in a system of sexual exchange - a heterosexual social order, demanding that these practices be enacted and granting sex when the men have displayed sufficient mastery. In the narratives these practices were characterised as work, once the work had been done then sex was presumed to be available. The following theme explores men’s submission to this social order, and the concomitant ambivalence at this submission, the perceived moments of autonomy, and the resistances. In all of these accounts, men negotiate the multiple truths described in Chapter 6: men want sex/more sex, sex as physical experience, men’s sexuality as different to women’s, and finally, controlling the sexual drive and sexual body.
Men’s work: mastering the practices of male sexual subjecthood

The sex as commodity account was usually signalled by talk about the work men did to secure sex, as in the following extracts from Fred:

Fred: well I don't know why it's not happening. (...) I don't know whether I've bought her the wrong sex aids or (...) or underwear or (...) nighties or anything like that (...) but. (...) Never seems to wear that sort of thing for encouragement either, but when she does put something nice on I certainly let her know that, that's nice, you look really nice in that, so as to give her, an encouragement. So, I try and (...) see it from her side as well, (...) but whether I've done something wrong or whether it's just (...) mother nature taking it's course I've got no idea.

[...]

Fred: but I want to try, I've been trying for years. I, ahh, (...) different magazines that have come out like "Man and Woman"(...) I've bought those, so that I could read up on all the different bits and pieces and ahmm. (...) So it, if I can endeavour (...) to (...) enhance our relationship

(Individual interview - age 63 & married.)

For Fred, a man who has been married for 40 years, the list of things he has done to facilitate sex, described as “it”, was lengthy. He had bought “sex aids”, “underwear”, “nighties” and “magazines”. He had tired to improve his knowledge to enhance their sex life, evoking the sexual skill discourse discussed in the analysis of representations (Chapter 5). He has given emotional support by letting his wife know how nice she looks in the lingerie he has purchased, and by attempting to understand her - “see it from her side”. He positions himself as determined: he has been “trying for years”. Fred has drawn on all the practices available to him, and yet he has been unsuccessful - “it’s not happening”. He frames the various practices he has enacted as oriented to the improvement of his and his wife’s sexual relationship, an attempt to “enhance our relationship”. However, within this storyline there does not appear to be any space for his wife to not want sex. She is disinterested in sex and this is positioned as problematic; his need for sex however, is unquestioned. His wife’s lack of interest is not intelligible, “I don’t know why it’s not happening”, because he has
shown himself to be a competent subject and has performed what was required of him. The explanation for the lack of sex is his insufficient mastery “maybe I’ve bought the wrong…done something wrong”; the alternative explanation - aging/illness - is explored in a subsequent theme. Fred’s account is a straightforward example of the way in which sex was constituted as a resource that men sought from women, and if they could perform the role of active male subject correctly they would achieve their goal. This characterisation resonates with many representations in men’s magazines (Chapter 5), which suggest that women granting access to sex is simply a matter of men’s displaying sufficient skill; good examples of this were *What would Casanova do?* (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001) and *The knowledge: Get sex on demand* (*FHM* Jun 2002).

Financial or economic tropes were prevalent in accounts articulating sex as commodity. Men often suggested a correlation between the outlay of financial resources and access to sex. In the following two extracts, the juxtaposition between the lack of sexual activity in his relationship and the money his partner spends on herself, establishes a relationship between the two.

Brendan: I'm only staying with the kids, and she came out, I think it was a week ago, she said she should have got rid of me five years ago. And I thought, okay right, you don't want to work, you spend any amount of money a week, get your legs waxed, get your hair done, get all this stuff done, and yet (...) I got to make an appointment for a once a year visit

[...]

Brendan: So (...) this other woman who's inter-state, said well, why don't you trying to make it work with your marriage or whatever else. And I thought well the only really thing I want, I don't (...) if I was getting night time activities, I wouldn't really give a shit how much she spent on (...) hair, legs or whatever else, but as far as I can see she's not getting her legs waxed or her hair done for me, it's for her own personal, she's one of these, keep up appearances

(Individual interview - age 35 & married.)
In the first extract above, Brendan’s wife is described as spending the money he earns, refusing to work, and yet he still has to “make an appointment” for sex. His outrage suggests he believes it is his right to expect that he should be having sex with his wife, that it should be more often than once a year, and that he should not have to “make an appointment”. In the second extract, he makes it more explicit, if she was granting access to sex, described as “night time activities”, he would not be bothered by the cost, that is, the money she spends on herself. There appears to be some resentment that the resources his wife expends on herself are for her and not for him - “she’s not getting her legs waxed or her hair done for me”; there is no suggestion that Brendan believes she is engaged in these practices for another man. It is possible to interpret Brendan’s account within the social exchange framework discussed in Chapter 2. Within this framework, Brendan has incurred costs and so has a reasonable expectation of rewards - according to Braun, Gavey and McPhillips (2003), the principle of reciprocity is seen to “produce an obligation to respond” (p. 240). Thus his wife, in denying him sex, is failing to fulfil her obligation, and Brendan receiving no return on his considerable investment, displays what Sprecher (2002) calls ‘inequity distress’ (see also Shotland & Goodstein, 1992). In reducing sex to a relationship resource, like washing the dishes, a social exchange model fails to take into account the multiple, and gendered meanings of sex; within the account Brendan presents, it is not simply that he is entitled to some reward for his efforts - he is entitled to sex.

For Brendan and Fred the problem in their respective relationships is positioned as a lack of access to sex, or regular sex, where “trying to make it work” entails securing “night time activities”. The narratives from many of the men in relationships were focused around their partners and the denial of sex, and were often characterised by this resentment. Men gave an account of enacting the appropriate practices of hetero-sexual masculinity, but sex was not forthcoming. The practices that men enacted for women, positioned women within the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 1984), that is, as having little or no desire in sex; thus the practices men described were designed to meet the desires that women do have.

Regardless of relationship context, men overwhelmingly construed themselves as competent, having mastered all the practices that signify them as appropriate hetero-
sexual male subjects (an exception to this is the narrative produced by Jim and explored later). Single men’s articulation and negotiation of this system of exchange, encompassed a different repertoire of appropriate practices. In interviews, they often articulated the most significant features of sex as commodity: women are not interested in having sex; women control access to sex; men must give women what they want in order to access sex. As in the married men’s extracts above, language evoking notions of exchange was also prevalent in single men’s accounts, and financial tropes were often utilised: “pay ‘em”, “you’re worth it”, “cheaper”, “gotta buy”, “paid for sex” and “buying”. This evocation of an economic model resonates with the guide to the ratio of drinks to passion featured in the *FHM Rules to Manhood* (*FHM* Jun 2002), discussed in Chapter 5.

I: Back to the drink thing, why do you think you have to buy drinks? Is that something implied?
Jack: It's a respect thing
Robbie: It's like, if you're worth buying a drink, then I'm buying you drinks.
Will: Chicks like it when you buy drinks
Robbie: They're flattered by it
Jack: It's a cheap version of actually, it's a cheap quick version of sitting and bloody, sitting down and getting to know them
Matt: It's a shortened version of a relationship
Hassad: I've also noticed how many girls (get) blokes to buy them drinks and stuff
Jack: I don't do it
Robbie: Jack’s right, it's a shortened version of a relationship, in a relationship you gotta buy the flowers, you gotta buy the chocolates. You've got anniversaries, you've got Valentine's Day; it's the condensed version man. Here's a Vodka Cruiser, this is Valentine's Day, it's red you know, and then you buy the next one
Will: What about (friend of group) he got a root off this girl (inaud.) 50-dollar cab ride, so he basically paid for sex
Matt: He should have man, he fucking should have

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)
In this group interview, the men showed themselves to be competent, and worthy, subjects. They know the system, what you have to do for sex - including waiting - and the appropriate practices, like buying drinks. They also articulated their knowledge of women - “chicks like it when you buy drinks… they’re flattered by it”. When the interviewer asks what buying a drink signifies, the men suggest it indicates respect - it positions a woman as worth something. A woman who requires some work by men, before she grants access to sex, is not a slag - she is worthy of respect. Demonstrating respect for a woman is an important part of the performance of appropriate subjection for men; through these practices, men prove to women that they are positioning women as worth more than just an object to have sex with. Protecting a woman’s reputation, and not positioning her as a sexual object, were important practices in the representation of skilful male sexuality discussed in Chapter 5. The article, *What would Casanova do* (*Men’s Health* Dec 2001), is a good example of this. As in the Casanova article however, it is understood that the performance of these practices will ultimately result in a woman granting access to sex.

In the extract above, men suggest that knowledge of women and their desires, allows men to subvert the system of exchange and so access sex more quickly/cheaply. Within this storyline women are positioned within a romantic - have/hold - discourse, they want a relationship or at least romance, want a man to be interested in *them* and not just in their body for sex; thus the practices that men enact are positioned as performances of this. Robbie’s list of different coloured drinks as supplanting relationship rituals is characterised as a circumvention of the conventional practices men enact to access sex, such as marking Valentine’s Day, buying flowers or chocolates. The implication is that women will be fooled by this performance. This theme of cheating the system (woman) ran throughout this particular focus group’s discussions. Positioning oneself as knowledgeable about the system - and of women - and so capable of stepping outside it to subvert it, arguably gives these men a sense of autonomy. That is, a man can experience himself as a “self-regulating subject who knows how to recognise appropriate behaviour and how to chose, unlike others, to perform that behaviour” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 178).
Interestingly, Jane Ussher (1997b) reports similar findings in interviews with heterosexual women, where they described performing a ‘feminine masquerade’, and the practices of femininity. Ussher argues that in enacting this kind of knowing performance women can allow a man to feel he is in control - for example, by letting him think he has chosen her - whilst still feeling in control of their own sexuality. Women also appeared to position the other - men - as fooled by woman’s performance. However, the occasional positioning of women as knowing performers in the focus group extracts above, for example in getting men to buy them drinks, suggests men may not be so taken in by this performance. Indeed, the representation of men and women playing the required roles - thus guaranteeing everyone gets what they desire - was a common representation in *FHM* (see Chapter 5). For Ussher’s participants, and in the accounts from men cited here, autonomy can be seen as a “moment of power…[where] we present ourselves as individual subjects who choose to act independently” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 179). This is more explicit in the following extract:

Robbie: It's like waiting in line at the Centerlink really
All: (laughter)
Robbie: You keep giving them shit until they give you what you want, you want the money off them. So you have to keep giving them shit. Line up, wait, wait, wait, wait, yeah, yeah. No. Line up again. It's the same with the birds, here's the hottest chick in the pub; rejected. There's the next hottest chick in the pub. (inaud.)
Matt: All the time I reckon there's the 5 o'clock skank
Robbie: Yeah, there's the one that's a sure bet, we'll keep her for later
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

Echoing the earlier characterisation of a knowing performance, Robbie’s description of “giving them shit” suggests men doing what needs to be done, a calculated performance rather than a naïve submission to woman’s demands. This is strengthened by the focus on sex as the reward; any woman will do, though there is a hierarchy, where men are required to start at the top “the hottest chick” and work

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31 Centrelink is the government agency responsible for the provision of Commonwealth financial support and related services, including to students.
their way down until a/any woman, even the “5 o'clock skank” the “sure bet”, says yes. Ultimately, sex with a low status woman is better than no sex at all. There were numerous representations in the men’s magazines of men using various strategies to secure sex where the focus was on sex with any woman that will say yes; for example, the attempt to adapt animal mating techniques to picking up in a bar (Makin’ bacon: Woo like the beasts (FHM Aug 2002)). This echoes the truths described earlier, where in the sex as physical truth, men were positioned as interested in sex and the woman involved was irrelevant.

It is a curious, and perhaps telling, analogy that Robbie draws between trying to pick up in a bar, and trying to secure financial support at Centrelink. In the Centrelink scenario, there are gatekeepers who control access to a desired commodity, money, there are criteria that must be met before the commodity is received, such as completing the correct forms, waiting in line, performing the appropriate practices of a deserving benefit recipient. His analogy positions women as the gatekeepers - withholding sex until the appropriate practices have been enacted; this is the same positioning discussed earlier where women block access to sex in the heterosexual sexual script (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Seidler, 1989). Men must work out the demands of the system, and then work to fulfil them; man’s competence is demonstrated when access to sex is granted.

Drawing on interviews with American men, Seal and Ehrhardt (2003) found men giving similar descriptions of the practices they enacted to “stimulate partners sexual desires and availability” (p. 303). Men produced narratives that “included the mention of compliments, sweet talk, promises of emotional and relational commitment (regardless of truth), and generalised sexual hints” (p. 303). These romantic experiences were usually positive for men, although resentment surfaced when women resisted men’s seduction efforts. Such rejection often left the men feeling unappreciated and not rewarded for their efforts. That the only acceptable reward for men’s efforts is sex, is clearly problematic for both men and women. As is the assumption that access to sex is simply a matter of enacting the correct seduction techniques - something apparent in many representations in the men’s magazines - in which the lack of a discourse of active female sexuality is almost certainly implicated (Cairns, 1993; Fine, 1988; Gavey et al., 1999; Tolman, 1991). This raises an
interesting difference between the performances that men do - to secure sex, and the ‘doing girl’ described earlier by Ussher. In describing the experiences of women who position themselves as ‘doing girl’, Ussher summarises:

A woman who is doing girl will ‘have sex’ if she wants to, if she enjoys it, or even because she is ‘in love’ - but if sex (or the man) does not live up to expectations (and standards these days are high) the woman who is doing girl won’t stay. She knows that ‘Mr Right’ is nothing but a myth, so she won’t sacrifice herself in the hope that someday her chosen man might transform himself into the handsome prince (1997b, p. 451).

There is a strong sense of independence here, a ‘take it or leave it’ approach which is conspicuously absent in the men’s accounts - positioned as active and initiating men keep trying until a woman says yes. This is reinforced by the strong sense of compulsion, with a concomitant sense of powerlessness, articulated by men positioned within the powerful male sex drive discourse, where their sexual drives need to be met, and are always potentially dangerous and uncontrollable (see Chapter 6). The repeated use of phrases like “gotta” and “have to” in many of the extracts above, suggests a lack of choice; in the Centrelink analogy, for example, the individual must submit to the government’s demands before receiving the rewards of the system, a reward that is arguably vital for their survival. These extracts suggest that men can understand the system, can even be a knowing performer in it, but they can never escape it. To get the desired rewards - sex - men must submit to the system. An important consequence of this is that within the hegemonic account of male sexuality, where men want sex/more sex, men are always dependent on women to provide access to sex. Indeed, in the men’s interviews, there was the repeated positioning of women as controlling sex, as evidenced by the following extracts from a focus group with married men and an individual interview with a single man.

Mark: The female runs the sex in the married couples life. If the female doesn't want it then the male definitely won't get it

(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)
Jim: the girls I went out with, particularly in the first couple of years ahmm used (...) or ahmm you know (...) used, used sex as a bit of a bargaining chip. (I: Hmm) You know ahmm, I'd have to do, its like, yeah (...) anyway it was like, you know, withholding, and it was you know, I, I obviously, I, I told them you now, or I spoke to them about what I wanted to do and (...) ahmm so they had what I wanted so its like you know (inaud.) demand and supply, the price went up
(Individual interview - age 35 & single.)

In the two extracts above, men position women as in control of sex - “runs the sex”, “if the female doesn’t want it then the male definitely won’t get it”, “used sex as a bargaining chip” and “they had what I wanted”. Across men in relationship and out of relationship, and across age range, this positioning of women was evident. In the following two extracts, from a young men’s focus group, the resentment at this situation is tangible.

Robbie: Women control the sex, which is a bad thing.
Jack: No they don't
Robbie: Yes they do, they control the sex man.
All: (laughter)
Robbie: WOMEN ARE THE MOST POWERFUL CREATURES IN THE WORLD BECAUSE THEY CONTROL THE SEX. I can have all the fucking money in the world, I'm Bill Gates, but I don't control the sex. […]
Robbie: You've gotta work way too hard for sex, you've gotta work. WE DON'T CONTROL THE SEX MAN
Jack: We don't. But what I'm saying, you could actually go though the process of meeting someone, bloody courting them, bloody buying them fucking shit 'n' doing everything else, getting to know them and vice-versa and shit. That's my view (doubt) get to the point were you actually enjoy bloody whatever
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)
Note particularly Robbie’s raw angry outburst, and Jack’s begrudging performance of the appropriate practices “bloody courting them, bloody buying them fucking shit 'n' doing everything else, getting to know them and vice-versa and shit”. The extracts above position women in a powerful role in relation to men, a positioning epitomised by Robbie’s comment that even if he was the richest most powerful man in the world, “Bill Gates”, he would still be dependent on woman to grant him access to sex. In these accounts, the resentment toward women is ostensibly due to women’s control over and so denial of sex. The truths of heterosexual male sexuality are taken for granted; it is implicit that sex is something men need - echoing the earlier positioning of sex as a matter of survival (see Chapter 6). By drawing on theories of subjection, we can perhaps understand this resentment and anger in a different way.

*Sex as recognition*

The desire for erotic union with another person who is endowed with the capacity to transform the self can be seen as the most intense version of the desire for recognition (Benjamin, 1995a, p. 185).

In reflexive work on their subjectification as schoolgirls, Bronwyn Davies and her colleagues argue that in working to become “appropriate subjects within the social order of schools” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 168), they had to master the appropriate practices of being a schoolgirl. The more they mastered the practices and meanings, the more fully subjected they became; that is, they submitted to the social order - indeed, they had to submit in order to become recognisable subjects. This is what Judith Butler (1995) calls the paradoxical simultaneity of mastery and submission, which she suggests produces considerable ambivalence. This understanding of subjection can be applied to heterosexual men, such that the resentment men expressed toward women in the interviews, in particular their anger at women controlling access to sex, can be read as ambivalence related to their simultaneous mastery and submission to the social order of heterosexuality. In order to be recognisable as hetero-sexual male subjects they must master the appropriate practices - buy drinks, be respectful, enact seduction; it is only through submission that these men become subjects, recognisable as a hetero-sexual male subject (Butler, 1997). A man who refuses to seek sex and offer women what they want - by
undertaking the appropriate practices - will not be granted sex. In the hegemonic account of male sexuality explored in this chapter, a man who does not desire and seek sex is unrecognisable as a man: he is not a subject.

It is a familiar argument that it is through sex that men prove their masculinity (see for example Frosh, 1995; Horney, 1973; Person, ; Segal, 1990; Seidler, 1989, p. 23; Ussher, 1997b). A post-structuralist approach, accounts for this in an explicitly social way. Sex is not inevitably the practice that proves masculinity, rather it is the central practice because of its significations within prevailing discourses. Moreover, this approach sees masculinity - indeed all subjectivity - as process, “always becoming” (A. Jones, 1997, p. 267), inevitably fractured and precarious (Weedon, 1987, 1997).

In contrast to the humanist subject, which emerges from within and is seen as the property of the individual, the post-structuralist subject is a product of discursive practices, the taking up of subject positions made available in discourses, and associated power relations. In her writings on subjectification, Butler claims that:

Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside of itself, in a discourse that is at once dominant and indifferent. Social categories signify subordination and existence at once. In other words, within subjection the price of existence is subordination. Precisely at the moment in which choice is impossible, the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence. This pursuit is not choice but neither is it necessity. Subjection exploits the desire for existence, where existence is always conferred from elsewhere; it marks a primary vulnerability to the Other in order to be. (1997, p. 20)

It appears that in many of these men’s accounts, it is through sex - or rather the granting of access to sex - that men seek the sign of their own existence; it is important to reiterate that it is only existence as *hetero-sexual male* subjects that is being explored here. Through their mastery of the practices of heterosexuality, and simultaneous submission to the discourses around gender and sexuality that constitute the conditions of possibility (Davies et al., 2001) for a hetero-sexual male subjecthood, men are inevitably vulnerable to woman. As was repeatedly stated in
the interviews, it is woman who grants access to sex; thus, it is possible to read woman as, in Butler’s terms, the Other who confers existence. It is woman who can unreasonably demand a man enacts the appropriate practices before conferring recognition. It is woman who can expose a lack of mastery (Frosh, 1994; Horney, 1973; Segal, 1990), either deliberately by denying sex, by not orgasming, or indeed by faking it (Roberts et al., 1995). It is woman who has the power to capriciously deny sex/recognition; for as one man reflected: “if the female doesn't want it then the male definitely won't get it”.

The implications for women in this social order are conflicting. On the one hand, they are positioned by these men as powerful through their control over the precious commodity of sex - which I am suggesting here signifies the external sign of their existence as a subject. However, in single men’s accounts an individual woman’s power was limited to granting or denying sex. The single men simply moved on to another woman when one said no; indeed, their anger was often directed toward women in general rather than a specific woman. For men in relationships, it was an individual woman, their partner, who was positioned as powerful, and the experience of powerlessness, of a lack of control over sex, appeared more significant.

Brendan: I said to her one night, totally fucking dead, whatever else, and I said, look (...) you don't mind me going down on you and pleasing you and making you come or whatever else, but, that's IT, you are not interested even in sex after that, it's like, I don't exist. I said well, I'm fucking sorry, I've bought you toys I've done this, I've done that, I've tried everything, and your just totally dead after that, there's you and there’s nobody else. (I: Hmm) (...) I won't say I forced her (inaud.) later I said right, (inaud.) in that shower I want oral now. (I: Hmm) No, I said you make a fucking effort, or else, I'm not going to make an effort anymore and that will be the end of it. So she made an effort (...) it was a half-baked, totally-pissed-me-off-effort, but it was an effort (...)

(Individual interview - age 35 & married.)

32 Recognition may be conferred in other ways, or from different Others; for example, a significant amount of research with young men and adolescent boys suggests that it is male peers who are invested with the power to confer existence - to recognise as hetero-sexual man (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe et al., 1994; Wight, 1994).
Brendan takes up the sex as commodity storyline, listing all of the appropriate practices he has engaged in (to please his wife) in order to access sex: he has tried everything - sexually pleasing her, buying sex toys, being faithful. He sets up a contrast between what he has done, and what she has given or should have given, in return - “you are not interested even in sex after that”. There is the implication, indeed expectation that his mastery of these practices would result in sex. Her denial of sex not only reveals his insufficient mastery of the practices that would signify him as a competent subject, but it reminds him of her power. Within Brendan’s account, his wife is the powerful Other who confers existence, and she denies him sex and the desired recognition as hetero-sexual subject: “it’s like, I don't exist”.

The subsequent sexual interaction - which is difficult not to frame as coercive sex, even if Brendan does not - can be read as an attempt at extorting recognition. In demanding his wife give him oral sex he removes himself from the social order he initially described submitting to, a system that failed him; he refuses to follow the rules, that is, the social/legal convention that men do not force sex. It is interesting that it is oral sex he demands and not intercourse, as sex is commonly understood to mean intercourse (Gavey et al., 1999). One possibility in that oral sex requires action, unlike intercourse where a woman can passively be done to, in fellatio a woman must be active. Another explanation is that some men experience fellatio as domination, believing that “the person performing it has been one upped by the person on the receiving end” (Paley, 1999, p. 159). Paley quotes a male porn star who accounts for the popularity of oral sex in x-rated videos thus: “Vicarious Revenge Motif. We are a vicarious cathartic revenge for all the men who […] never had a beautiful woman hanging to the head of their dick” (p. 159).

However, Brendan’s demand/domination and his wife’s submission paradoxically robs her of her positioning as Other. Jessica Benjamin argues that “the self must yet recognise the other as a subject like itself in order to be recognised by the other” (1995a, p. 36); in the moment when Brendan demands his wife perform oral sex, when he fails to recognise her independent will, he strips her of her subjectivity. In

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33 It is interesting that he includes this declaration of faithfulness as by this point in the interview, he had already told me of his considerable extramarital relationships.
Brendan’s account, his wife becomes an object that he controls - safe, there is nothing to fear from her (Ussher, 1997b), but no longer a subject, she has no position from which to speak. As Benjamin states: “If I completely control the other, than the other ceases to exist…A condition of our own independent existence is recognising the other” (1988, p. 53). His wife’s effort is an empty recognition, as evidenced by the ambivalence Brendan describes: “it was a half-baked, totally-pissed-me-off-effort”. It is worth nothing that there is no sense of pleasure in Brendan’s account, nor of him having had his sexual needs met.

What I am suggesting here is that even though he secures access to sex, Brendan’s ambivalent response suggests that has not received his desired recognition as a hetero-sexual male subject. Evidence from research on men who abuse women offers some support for this. Tony Jefferson (2002) notes that men often display remorse and shame (not pride) following their abuse of a partner, and that they rarely boast about it (unlike the performance stories noted by Holland et al. (1994)). In enacting the abuse, Jefferson suggests men do not experience themselves as ‘being a man’. I am not suggesting that Brendan coerced his wife into sex because she denied him something essential, be that sex or recognition. This is the storyline Brendan adopts, takes up as his own, a storyline that is available to men within the hegemonic account of male sexuality where sex is a commodity; his action is framed in terms of getting what he is entitled to - sex. An entitlement that is intelligible within the male sex drive discourse.

**Accounting for the lack of sex: Maintaining appropriate subjecthood**

All of the men whose interviews are discussed in this section constituted themselves as having a sexual need, a desire to have sexual intercourse with a woman; however, they are in monogamous relationships where sex is not happening at all, or with the regularity they desire. The lack of sex thus jeopardises their position as competent hetero-sexual male subjects, by denying them the primary means by which men secure recognition as a hetero-sexual man and by signifying a lack of mastery. The analysis of the theme ‘accounting for the lack of sex’ explores how these men maintain their position as appropriate and recognisable subjects in this situation.
There are two strategies - or lines of action - which emerged. Firstly, men focused on the reasons why sex was not happening which usually entailed framing it as their partner’s problem. Some men also adopted a second strategy, that of seeking sexual satisfaction elsewhere. It is important to note that for the most part, leaving the relationship was not positioned as a viable option for the men interviewed, often because of children; these men therefore must also account for staying in a ‘sexless’ relationship where they are not having their needs met - needs that are, as has been repeatedly shown, unquestionably positioned as the core truth of male sexuality.

**Women as barriers: accounting for the lack of sex**

This theme illustrates a situation where the absence of sex threatens to reveal men’s insufficient mastery of the practices that signify male sexual subjecthood. In these narratives, men demonstrate themselves to be competent and appropriate subjects through providing an alternative account of the lack of sex. Many accounts began with men evoking the notion that sex declines when men get married, or when the relationship becomes serious.

Daniel: so I mean she'd come over on the weekends and it was like, (sound of clapping hands) it was really hot, ahmm, and it kind of started (laughing) to slow down as soon as she moved in with me. (laughing) (…) It was like, I, she moved in and in the back of my mind I was thinking, mid-week sex yes. (laughing) I: (laughing) I'd died and gone to heaven you know. (laughing) And ahmm and it didn't happen, in fact, it went in the other direction, it started to slow down, and I'm going, (sharp breath in) ahh, ahmm, yeah, it was, ahmm

(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

Mark: see when you're single there no more female (inaud.) you get sex whenever you want it especially when you're dating. Cause you have lust so you're rooting left right and centre then it starts to calm down and as soon as you get married it stops. It goes from a different type of field, you walk in you make out for a period of time then it's a slide down and now you may get it maybe once a month. (…) They develop from as much as you want it to
(…) (laughing) and that's when the fellas keep saying 'are we able to?' 'Is tonight ok' and you get a whack across the head 'don't be silly' and we go tap tap tap on the shoulder that'll be (…) 

(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

The men in the extracts above take up the truth of men desiring sex/more sex: “mid-week sex yes”, “sex whenever you want”, and “this is not the way it's supposed to be”. Thus positioning the decline in sex as being due to their partner’s lack of interest in sex, or rather their unwillingness to give men access to sex. The simplest explanation for this was that women have lower sexual drives and thus do not need or want sex as much/often as men.

Daniel: (sighs) AHMM dunno maybe it's just that our natural (…) ahmm level of libido is different (I: Hmm) (…) but certainly I've ahmm (…) ahh felt that there was you know (…) ahmm a lack (…) there

(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

Grant: OH the relationship was, was fine but it wasn't sort of. (coughs) Probably, the, you know, the age, sort of, eighteen to twenty, I guess, it wasn't necessarily the intense-ness that I, that I thought that it was suppose to be. (I: Hmm) Ahmm and (…) her needs especially from a sexual point of view were less than what mine were

(Individual interview - age 49 & divorced.)

A variation on this explanation was for men to ascribe sexual needs to women but suggest that they were latent, and needed to be uncovered. In these accounts men not only evoked the positioning of women prevalent in sexological discourses, where women’s instinct needed to be ‘awakened’ (M. Jackson, 1987), but also the sexual skill discourse that positions woman’s sexuality as dependent on man’s skill (see Chapter 3). For example, in the following extract, Brendan positions himself within the skilful discourse discussed in Chapter 5: he possesses the expertise to awaken woman’s sexuality.
Brendan: ahmm so I don't know whether she's just (...) I don't know, dead inside, depressed, or just totally not interested (...) because of all the other women I've talked to (...) none of them have sort of said, no, if you know what I mean, like they all say, well how the hell could she manage, and I go, well I'm, stuffed if I know, I couldn't, I'd go berserk, you know [...]

Brendan: what my wife needs is someone like me, that's not me (laughs) to wake her up and send her home, (laughs)

I: yeah, do you, does it frustrate, is it frustrating then to kind of think (...)

Brendan: well Jez the amount of women (inaud.)

I: (inaud.)

Brendan: the amount of women I have slept with and (...) I've only had complaints from one

(Individual interview - age 35 & married.)

Brendan has been unable to awaken his wife’s latent sexual desire; this casts doubt on his mastery of sexual skill. However, by positioning his wife as not like other women - he has been with many women and no one else complained - his failure to awaken her sexuality is her failure: his mastery of sexual skill is sufficient. This is reinforced by his discussions with other women who confirm that there is something wrong with her, and not him. An attempt to understand his wife’s sexuality in terms of the permissive discourse (Hollway, 1989) where men and women are understood to have sexual needs, only confirms his positioning of her - “how the hell could she manage”. She is not understandable; he can apply no other discourse or framework to understand her lack of interest in sex. Brendan’s positioning of the lack of sex as his wife’s fault is repeated throughout the interview, and is reinforced by his characterisation of her as “brain dead”, “the ice queen”, “dead inside”. Again, this resonates with early sexological discourses around women’s frigidity; where the failure to exhibit a sexual drive under the expert skill of a man was a “form of resistance, a refusal not merely to comply with male sexual demands, but to accept the facts of life” (M. Jackson, 1987, p. 69). The storyline that Brendan adopts leaves his subjecthood intact; he desires sex and has demonstrated himself to be competent through his mastery of sexual skill.
A few men gave accounts of the lack of sex that focused on the stresses of modern life, and on relationships and family life. Unlike the preceding accounts, there is the potential that domestic and relationship stresses will affect men as well as their partners. However, men usually took up the truth of male and female sexuality as different (see Chapter 6), with the contrasting accounts of woman’s sexuality as vulnerable and fragile, and a man’s as driven and unyielding; as in the following extracts:

Brendan: (…) no we can't tonight because the baby's awake, no we can't tonight because the baby's in the same room (…) then (long pause) hurry up and finish (long pause)
(Individual interview - age 35 & married.)

Mark: there's always an excuse; I'm tired cause they have been to work, they're sore, been with the kids all day I just want some time out.
(Group interview - ages 23-41 & in relationships.)

The baby being in the same room was not a concern for Brendan, and his tone suggests this was simply an excuse, a way to avoid - or curtail - sex; this is explicit in Mark’s account “there’s always an excuse”. A number of the married men suggested their partners used domestic stress as a way to deny sex, a positioning that inevitably prioritises male sexual needs over women’s sexual desires. Rarer, was men characterising these situations as ‘understandable’, citing an awareness of the stress their partners were under.

A very common account of the reason for sex scarcity was a partner’s illness or other longstanding issue - such as cancer, menopause, diabetes, sexual abuse - which made sex problematic. During his interview, Fred talked about how his wife’s diabetes, and then later her menopause, resulted in a decrease in sex.
Fred: AHH, they weren't quite as flamboyant as they used to be, prior to that. But since she has been diagnosed with diabetes, her doctor has told her she's got diabetes and, and she is on diet control. (I: Hmm) It's virtually none existent (…) ah last year for example, there was about six occasions (…) ahh to me, I'm not happy with that
(Individual interview - age 63 & married.)

In the extract above, Fred produces an account of his partner’s illness to explain a lack of sexual activity in the relationship, and thus remain recognisable as a desiring and desirable hetero-sexual male subject. In many of the ‘chronic’ accounts, men talked about what was reasonable in the situation - a reasonable amount of time to be ill, a reasonable amount of time to feel weak, and a reasonable expectation of sex. In some accounts, there was a kind of reality testing, where men compared their partner’s responses or behaviour to how they imagine they themselves would behave, or to their own knowledge of women. This echoes the previous discussion of male sexual skill, where men’s sexual expertise and knowledge of women, was positioned as superior to women’s, such that a man might test a woman’s sexual responses against his own knowledge (Waldby et al., 1993, for further discussion see Chapter 3).

The following analysis of one man’s narrative examines how one participant took up the various lines of action discussed above to account for the lack of sex in his relationship, and how adopting a number of subject positions produced conflicts and ambivalences in his attempt to remain recognisable as a hetero-sexual male subject.

Daniel’s wife’s denial: A struggle for recognition

Throughout Daniel’s interview there was a consistent narrative of the lack of sex in his relationship, and his dissatisfaction at this situation; he repeatedly accounted for this by talking about his wife as the barrier. Specifically, her experience of recovering memories of childhood sexual abuse, and the therapy she subsequently engaged in, and her diagnosis and recovery from breast cancer, were all cited. A number of extracts from his narrative are discussed here.
Daniel: ahh she had a lumpectomy so she didn't have to have the whole mastectomy or that ahh and then after the surgery and we got the pathology back and they said "yes it's definitely, you know, it's cancer, it's fly-by form (doubt) (...) we think we've got it all, we'd like to do a bit more cutting blah blah blah". Ahh I mean obviously we were both too traumatised to think too much about sex AHMM and (...) so all sex ceased to, then at that point, and then she was really sick after, the surgery she decided not to have any radiation of chemo, (burps) excuse me. So ahmm she went like all natural herbs and diet and so on and ahmm (...) I had to take on a lot of (...) you know the kind of, much more of a carer role (...) (sighs). But she's recovered ahmm like, quite well, ahmm there still isn't any sex.

(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

Daniel begins the narrative by taking up a position of supportive husband - the cancer is a shared experience “we were both too traumatised to think too much about sex”. At this point, the lack of sex was acceptable. The narrative changes when his partner makes a decision not to have chemotherapy and he moves from supportive husband to carer. He is excluded from the decision making process and the narrative shifts from a shared experience - we - to an experience that his wife determines - “she decided” “she went all natural herbs”. Daniel has become powerless, the decision to have sex or not is no longer his or theirs, but exclusively hers. The lack of sex becomes problematic for Daniel when he decides she has recovered - “But she's recovered ahmm like, quite well, ahmm there still isn't any sex”.

Daniel: Ahmm (...) the thing and I kind of took that as (...). Okay I like, (...) she has to lie down a couple of times in the day, she doesn't have the energy, she's not interested ahh, if I'm sick I don't feel too much like sex either ahmm and then (...) (loud exhale) (...). If, there, there, was this survey that you sent out, I got, I got it in the mail. I sort of, I didn't (...) mention, she said "what's that", I said oh (...) it's a survey on (...) ah male sexuality that I (...) agreed to do, blah blah, THAT NIGHT we had sex, (...) (sniffs) THAT NIGHT (...) never had it since, that was in October mate (doubt)

I: what do you think (...) why do you think that was (..)
Daniel: (...) I, you know, I think it's like, somebody AHH somebody else might find out that we are not having sex. (long pause) You know (...) ahmm (...) and ahh I mean, maybe it's. (...) I don't know, if it's perverse of me or not, but I didn't include that in my response to the survey (laugh snort) because I thought it was an anomaly (...) ahmm and it proves to have been an anomaly, you know. It's now nearly two years, we still don't have sex. She's saying things like "ahh I don't when I'll want to have sex again", ahmm ahh "it could be a long time" (...). You know or ahmm some times if she's feeling anxious about it, I'm trying to kind of (...) re-establish a (...) sexual relationship and ahh but she's not actually, like she's trying to re-establish a sexual relationship without actually having sex. (Sounds like he has thumped chair/table twice) (I: Hmm) you know DOESN’T work for me (laughs) (I: Hmm) you know DOESN’T (sounds like he has thumped chair/table twice) not compute

(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

In the next section of the narrative, it appears that different subject positions produce conflict for Daniel. He acknowledges how little energy she has, attempting to understand how he would feel if it was happening to him, “if I’m sick I don’t feel too much like sex”. However, the subsequent story of the survey, questions the genuineness of his wife’s position. According to his positioning of her, it was only when it looked like she may become subject to the public gaze, and her position of good wife could become untenable if she was revealed to be denying him sex, that she allowed sex. The strong emotion in his narrative, “THAT NIGHT”, can be read as related to his wife prioritising the possibility that someone else might find out she was refusing him sex, above his need/desire to have sex. That is, she allowed sex because she was worried about her reputation, and not because she was worried about his needs. In failing to recognise his nature - as a man with sexual needs - she denies him recognition as a hetero-sexual male subject.

Daniel’s narrative evokes sex as commodity; there are various practices evident - sharing the trauma, not expecting sex, understanding her experience, supporting her alternative therapy choice, being a carer, trying to re-establish their sexual relationship. These can be read in a similar way to the buying drinks in the sex as
commodity section discussed earlier. Further, his enacting of these practices signify him not only as an appropriate hetero-sexual male subject, but also as a good husband. This offers a second possible reading of his strong emotional response to the sex he and his wife had after the survey arrived. In granting sex only when others might judge her, his wife reveals his insufficient mastery of the correct practices. The sex as commodity storyline envisages sex if the correct practises are enacted. As long as his wife held the position of ill, the lack of sex did not threaten his subjecthood, because an alternative discourse of illness was available. Her subsequent recovery and continued denial of sex presented a considerable threat to his subjecthood; the sex they subsequently had was his undoing, as it makes the woman as barrier account he had adopted untenable.

Daniel’s refusal to record the sex he and his wife had (on the survey), is an interesting act of resistance. In not recording the sex, he refuses to grant her the recognition she desires - that is, the desire he attributes to her of not wanting other people to know they do not have sex. Does Daniel experience this as an act of autonomy? He cannot not make sex happen, he is reliant on his wife for that, and also for the recognition he desires; the only power he has in this story is to deny her. If we recall Davies et al.’s description of autonomy as a “moment of power…[where] we present ourselves as individual subjects who choose to act independently” (2001, p. 179), is this the “moment of power” where Daniel experiences himself as an autonomous subject? His laughter, indeed snorting, suggests a kind of victory. Daniel’s action seems more like secret defiance: his resistance is limited in that his wife, we assume, is not aware of his denial of her. Further, the more powerful line of action that was available to him, not having sex when it was offered, is not entertained in his account. Not only is turning down sex an unimaginable act, it would rob Daniel of the possibility of subjecthood.

Sexual substitutes: accounting for other sexual practices

As we have seen already, the core truth of male sexuality is the desire for sex with a woman, with coitus the fundamental practice. Regardless of whether men described their sexuality as driven by a biological, physiological, or reproductive imperative, they all articulated a desire for sex/more sex. An important corollary of this was the
need for an alternative means of satisfying the sexual drive if a man’s partner was not available (or unwilling or uninterested). According to Margaret Jackson, one of the principles of the scientific model of sexuality, which privileges the biological account, is that “if the (male) sexual drive is denied legitimate outlets, it will find satisfaction in illegitimate ones” (1987, p. 72). In the following narratives, men draw on this notion of a male sexual need requiring satisfaction to account for masturbation, or their going outside their relationship for sex. The discursive work men do in the following extracts constitutes them as particular kinds of subjects and legitimates potentially transgressive - morally or socially - sexual practices (within a discourse of monogamy). These accounts are primarily from men in relationships.

The men drew on three discursive resources to construe their conduct as reasonable. The first resource was to evoke the male sex drive: it is taken for granted that men need sexual relief. Some men drew more heavily on this notion, particularly on the potential consequences of not obtaining sexual release. For example, Daniel characterises masturbation as a “coping mechanism”, and Fred builds his narrative around this notion (and see earlier discussion). The second resource utilised was to position the lack of sex as their partner’s fault, this is the same storyline as that discussed in the preceding section. Brendan used this very effectively. The third resource was to distance themselves from responsibility or intent. For example, Brendan positions his affair as having occurred by accident, he met someone “just by off chance”.

A note about terminology; the term substitutes should not be read as privileging intercourse within a relationship over the sexual practices the men recount. The term refers to the men’s own characterisation of the sexual practices they were engaged in - masturbation, extramarital sex, paying for sex - as in lieu of sexual relations with their life/romantic partner. Mary Kehily reports a similar finding in her interviews with British high school students, where students referred to pornography as consolation, a “poor substitute for sex with a woman” (2001, p. 182).
Masturbation

The men’s talk about sexual substitutes was usually preceded by an account of the lack of availability of sex with their partner, which establishes the men’s desire and preference for sex with a woman. A deficit account, where no sex results in the need for substitutes, was common in the interviews when men talked about ‘other’ sexual practices.

Daniel: if things didn't work out right, if she were, like there were times when you would just kind of miss out, basically and that was that for that month. (I: Hmm, hmm) That was it you could forget it. (...) AHMM (...) (blows) So consequently I have to say that I've been auto-erotic for a lot of my marriage (...) (I: Hmm) (...) ahmm (...) and that's been kind of (...) a coping mechanism.
(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

In the extract above, masturbation is a practice borne of necessity; the lack of sex within his relationship means that his needs are not being met. Daniel constructs the barrier to the satisfaction of his sexual needs as his wife, “you would just kind of miss out” and “you could forget it”, which in turns positions him as desiring sex with his wife. Pornography use was often part of the masturbation account, though no specific reference to masturbation is made in the following extract. Again, a deficit model is employed; if men were having “real sex” or “very regular sex” then they would not have used or needed to use pornography. Moreover, men often normalised their practice.

Daniel: (...) ahmm (...) I, no, I, I, I kind of suspect that the people that get really hooked up on that [pornography], that are strung out about it, are, and I don't mean, I mean people that kind of get a bit addicted (...) to it. I suspect they are people that are a bit kind of (...) ahmm (...) shy or not (...) actually have, actually real sex, (laughs), you know (I: Hmm) that they have a substitute fantasy sex, or maybe that's just me but (...) ahmm. (...) And then there's, you know, there may be some others that are a bit more bent, you know, ahmm (...) that are a bit kind of, I don't know what would you call it, a
bit psychopathic or something you know, but I think that's a fairly small proportion in relation. (I: Hmm) Ahmm (…) yeah, its, its ahmm, its probably not something that I would be bother with if I was having (…) very regular sex you know

(Individual interview - age 48 & married.)

Daniel draws a distinction between men who use pornography as a substitute because they are a bit shy or are not having “real sex” and men who are “bent” or “psychopathic”. He places himself in the former group which positions him as a pornography user by necessity: his use of pornography is a function of his lack of access to real sex. His preferencing of sex over pornography or masturbation, ensures he is still recognisable as a hetero-sexual-man. Regardless of whether men themselves experienced their practice in this way, there is an implicit shame associated with both masturbation and pornography use. It is notable that Daniel does not draw on positive accounts of pornography use or masturbation, for example of sexual freedom or an enhancement to his sexual life.

Daniel appears to successfully construct a narrative that accounts for his masturbation or pornography use by framing them as understandable practices in a situation where he had few choices. His narrative include the signifiers of hetero-sexual man, such as taking up the subject position in the male sex drive as both needing and desiring sex with a woman. Moreover, he has disciplined his body to desire intercourse with a woman (Kehily, 2001), and demonstrated repeatedly that he is resorting to masturbation (and pornography) only as a substitute.

Seeking sex outside the relationship

For other men, the substitute was not masturbation but extramarital sexual relationships. In contrast with the masturbation account in the previous section, men who seek sex outside their monogamous relationships have to account for transgressing the expectations of the have/hold discourse; the two men below (Brendan and Fred) achieve this in different ways.
Brendan: (...) ahmm let me see, yes (...) I don't want to be crude or anything, (chuckles) but they say once you get married your sex life ends and I think that's true (laughs) (I: okay) most of the guys I work with that seems to be the same (...) story that, I don't know whether a, shift work, or whether it's just (...) (sighs) lack of interest or what ever it is. (I: Hmm) ahmm (...) I find that ahmm, I just gave up bothering to ask. I got fed up with the ahh, the Christmas, birthday, anniversary, and her birthday, times of the year. And then it had to, constantly, to say ahh, okay, let me see, will you be home at eleven o'clock Friday night, if I'm still awake then maybe, and I, I thought, bugger this and I couldn't be bothered. (I: Hmm) And (...) just by off chance, I've met somebody one night and ahh, used to (inaud.) a lot of people on the Internet and I went out with some people and they had an actual and there was a friend there and she was divorced and whatever else, and talking to her and (...) that's where I started (laughs)

[...]

Brendan: and she says oh what are you doing online, isn't tonight your night, and I said yeah, well the fucking agenda changed, cause the ice-queen’s not interested (...) you know (I: Hmm) and then (...) it was just, ah yeah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and I said I might come and see you some time (...) and I must have got her on her few glasses of wine, and she's gone, yeah when, ha, and I said (...) I looked up where she lived and (...) I said forty five minutes, and she goes, yes okay (...) I didn't even shut the computer down, I just hit the off button, phiff, and just walked straight out the door, (I: Hmm) and I thought well, I've been pushed to it, as far as I'm concerned (...) I just had enough I'm not going to be on a roster, I'm not bloody interested (Individual interview - age 35 & married.)

In the extracts above, Brendan gives two accounts of going outside his relationship for sex. He draws on a common discourse of marriage as the death of sex, which he suggests is a common situation - “they say” and “most of the guys I work with that seems to be the same”. This account draws on the notion that men and woman have inevitably different sexual desires (see Chapter 6). The explanations he originally mentions for the lack of sex are external (shiftwork), or ambiguous, though it is not clear whether the lack of interest is his or his partner’s. The subsequent story
clarifies: in his situation, it is his partner who is to blame - “the ice-queen’s not interested”. He paints a picture of how unreasonable his situation was: he became worn down - “gave up bothering”, ”fed up” and “couldn’t be bothered” - by his own repeated efforts to secure sex, being scheduled to “Christmas, birthday, anniversary, and her birthday”, “eleven o’clock Friday night” and “your night”. In both extracts there is a sense of a build up resulting in a break out by him: “bugger this I couldn’t be bothered” and “I’ve been pushed to it, as far as I’m concerned (…) I just had enough”. The reference to not shutting down the computer in the second extract has a detached air to it, which suggests his decision was easy, even urgent. Though his subsequent blaming of his wife - “I've been pushed to it” - belies this and suggests a punishment - “I'm not bloody interested”.

Again, we see a moment of autonomy in Brendan’s story, where he presents himself as an “individual subject who chooses to act independently” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 179), and as in the pervious examples of autonomy, it is his wife’s perceived control of granting sex that he is acting independently of. In this second storyline he positions his wife as having control over sex: she schedules him, sets the agenda, fixes the roster. His extramarital relationship can be read as a resistance to this - “I’m not going to be on a roster” - he should have sex when he needs/wants it. His wife exercising her power unreasonably, even capriciously, becomes the reason for his transgression of the expectations of discourses of monogamy. That is, his transgression is her fault. Interestingly, what Brendan never explicitly articulates is that he desires/needs sex; it is a taken for granted and in his situation, his need is not being met.

In this next analysis, one man’s narrative of paying for sex is examined to trace the various subject positions he takes up and resists in producing a recognisable account of hetero-sexual male subjectivity.

Fred’s conflict: Submission and mastery

A significant proportion of men talked about going outside their relationship for sex. Only one man talked about paying for sex, a discussion that took place in the context of a narrative about this sexual needs, and the lack of sexual relief in his marriage.
Fred: I have felt urges where I've, I've wanted to walk up to another lady and really kiss her and cuddle her and (...) and take her to bed (I: Hmm) (...) and ahh, I just don't want to do that

[...]

Fred: and ahh, (...) but the few times that I have been with the other ladies (sex workers), it certainly helped to ease me down. Cause it's been, (...) naked body contact and all this sort of thing, or skin contact, and (...) I felt that it's helped me to, settle myself back down again (I: Hmm) rather than, look at all women as a sexual object it settled me back down and I can go about doing the things that I should be doing

(Individual interview - age 63 & married.)

It is worth noting the strong emphasis on build up and relief in Fred’s story (see Chapter 6). Throughout the interview, Fred took up the male sex drive discourse to understand his own sexuality, making repeated references to his sexual urges. He needed sex to “ease me down”, “settle myself back”, “settle me back down”, “pull me back” and “get some relief”. Fred drew a distinction between his sexual urges and what he wanted - “I just don’t want to do that” and “the things I should be doing”. It is possible to read this as a separation of the desiring body and the rational mind discussed by Potts (2002), and examined in the previous chapter in relation to control of the sexual body and sexual drive. Fred presents himself as a competent subject, exercising self-control over his potentially uncontrollable sexuality. The reference to “naked body contact” and “skin contact” suggests a desire for connection; the implication that he can only receive this through sex echoes the writing of many in the critical men’s studies field who suggest that one of the negative consequences of hegemonic masculinity is that men must suppress the desire for intimacy, for touching that is not sexual (Seidler, 1985, 1989; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999).

I: where do you see this going, do you think this is something that will change or (…)

Fred: I don’t know whether it will change or not. (...) As far as I'm concerned we are partners (...) but, I do get the urge that (...) I need a lady to (...) pull me back down to the ground again. (I: Hmm) ahh, I don't want to go out and
see, the ladies at the bar and that, I don't really like that scene, but it is a means of (...) getting it without any strings attached, pay for the services and that all, finished with

I: do you, is your wife aware the you have done that
Fred: no, no, no, I have kept that to myself
I: what do you think her reaction would be
Fred: (...) probably she would walk out the door, (...) which I don't really want, because, I, as far as I'm concerned (...) I've, we took vows when we married, and it's for better and for worse. (...) ahmm but I still feel that I have got to get some relief, (...) and that's why I go to those ladies (...) like. But over the last two years, (...) I've been there I think about four or five times, (I: Hmm) but unfortunately it's never the same lady (...) ahh in some ways that's good, because there's not the encouragement to come back. (I: okay) so, (...) whilst I've enjoyed (...) being there (I: Hmm) and I've got relief (...) I'm still reluctant to go there all the time

(Individual interview - age 63 & married.)

Fred positions himself as experiencing bodily urges, which can only be relieved by “a lady”. In line with the male sex drive discourse, the appropriate object of his urges is woman. In common with the accounts discussed previously, Fred’s partner is not available so he must go elsewhere. On one level, this can be read as the classic deployment of the male sex drive discourse to justify extramarital sexual liaisons (Stenner, 1993). However, having taken up the account of hegemonic male sexuality - in particular the notion of male sexual drive - as the truth about himself, what options are available to this man? Fred repeatedly makes articulates a conflict between his positioning in the male sex drive and have/hold discourses: “as far as I’m concerned we are partners but I do get the urge”, “I don’t really like that scene but it is a means of getting it without strings attached” and “it’s for better and for worse (...) ahmm but I still feel”. The resolution to this conflict is to privilege his sexual drive/need.

Fred’s evocation of the male sexual drive discourse was not only in terms of relief. As previously discussed Fred made repeated references to the possible loss of control precipitated by his sexual drive “I've wanted to walk up to another lady and really
kiss her and cuddle her and (...) and take her to bed”. There were repeated references in his interview to fears of breaking sexual harassment laws, of sexually dominating his wife when he makes sexual advances: “feel as though I'm, in a way raping her”. Having taken up the hegemonic account of male sexuality as the truth about his own sexuality, and the paradoxical construction of an uncontrollable sexuality that requires control (see Chapter 6) Fred must undertake mastery of it. In contrast to the men above, his account is one of control and management. His paying for sex becomes a rational solution - no strings attached - to a conflict produced by his positioning within two competing discourses. It is notable that Fred expresses both reluctance, and a fear that his partner would be devastated if she knew. Knowing his behaviour may destroy his relationship - the expectations of his wife, his own position as a good husband - is set against the powerful imperative to relieve his sexual need.

According to Davies and Harré, “the possibility of choice in a situation in which there are contradictory requirements provides people with the possibility of acting agentically” (1990, p. 59). In the narrative above, Fred articulates a conflict between two dominant discourses; does he act agentically? His separation of sex from his relationship, keeping his transgression secret, and his fear that if his wife found out she would leave him, suggests an accommodation of the have/hold discourse that protects his emotional connection with his wife. On the other hand, he resists the have/hold discourse by marshalling the power of the male sex drive discourse to take up a line of action - paying for sex. However, this is a line of action made available by, and necessitated by, the male sex drive discourse. Although he construes his conduct as rational, suggesting he has made a decision, there is no suggestion he has a choice. The potential consequences of his sexuality, produced by the male sex drive, and the notion of an uncontrollable male sexuality, if he does not see a sex worker, make any choice impossible.

This discursive interpretation does not deny the materiality of Fred’s experience, rather it focuses on the options open to him to produce an account of his seeking sex outside his relationship. It is because of his contradictory positioning in a number of discourses that Fred must account for his actions, discourses around monogamy, such as the have/hold discourse, emphasise faithfulness, trust, commitment and relational
dimensions, where the previously discussed truth that men want sex/more sex emphasised not only a biological drive for sex, but an urgent need that threatens to become out of control.

**Regulating the meaning of sex: Maintaining appropriate subjecthood**

What Australian animal most resembles the Australian male? The wombat, because he eats, roots and leaves. (Amazing Australian Jokes)

A recurrent theme in the single men’s interviews was references to *just* sex. For men taking up this account, the meaning of sex was tightly regulated such that it only signifies an opportunity to have a physical need met, an evocation of a number of truths outlined in the previous chapter. This is sex construed as the purest response to a male sex drive. Within this theme, sex is construed as meaning nothing or having no meaning. That is, sex has no social or emotional significance, it is just a physical act. Men evoked this account by referring to “just sex”, “nothing more than sex” and “only sex”; this signalled both the kind of interaction they were interested in and more importantly, what they were not interested in. The need to distinguish some sex in this way is necessary because sex can signify other things. The most relevant discourse is the have/hold discourse, which positions sex as special, significant and meaningful, signifying connection, commitment and love (Hollway, 1984). This theme is about the practices enacted to regulate the meaning of sex, to suppress some significations and the expectations of men they engender, and to protect men’s access to the signifiers of male sexuality within the context of casual sex.

In many of the accounts, men took up the truth that for men sex is physical, drawing a distinction between sex and everything else - everything else being intimacy, emotion, connection, etc. For example, in the extracts below, George and Sach talk about “just sex”, “that’s all there is to it” and “a nice little filler”. As previously discussed (Chapter 6), within the sex as physical truth, women were often reduced to objects, rendered irrelevant; this is evident in the following extracts.
Garth: don’t really need to have intimacy with sex, it depends who you are with. Umm not always, it depends what you want from that person. Sort of there are some people you might only want to have sex with, you don’t really get along with them so you wouldn’t look to them for a relationship, so then for what ever reason you want to have sex with them
(Individual interview - age 23 & de facto.)

George: you know, I just mean like when I’m saying it’s not intimate and that, it would be more like a one-night-stand type situation and that’s just sex, yeah sex, that’s all there is to it and you don’t really know the person at all, so, yeah
(Individual interview - age 34 & single.)

Sach: (...) I guess it was the same sort of mentality that ahmm, I'll be leaving soon so (...) you're just a nice little filler (...) but ahmm (...) I don't think I want to see her again
(Individual interview - age 25 & single.)

Burton: while you may have casual sex with just anyone you probably would tend to forget about it
Victor: having casual sex settles into that sort of norm in your mind, then you don't naturally remember who your partner was last week, last month or last year
(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

Among the single men in this study, just-sex was the sex they had with women they didn’t want a relationship with, didn’t want to see again, didn’t like or didn’t really know; that is, with “just anyone”. This notion, which Garth articulates as “there are some people you might only want to have sex with”, suggests a positioning of women within the Madonna/Whore dichotomy (Ussher, 1997b), where the women men want to have just-sex with are positioned as Whore. Within this account, the focus is on the sex and not on the interaction with a woman. The implication of the distinction drawn between sex and a relationship in the extracts discussed so far was
that there was no future and as such men were not subject to any expectations; a scenario epitomised by the one-night-stand or affair where there is no commitment. In the last extract above, just-sex ceased to exist in the future, there was no memory associated with it. What is forgotten however is not the sex but the woman, something which reinforces just-sex as sex rather than woman focused.

Jack: You got to a club or a pub, approach a woman, do the hunt, so to speak in a fucking different way than if you were at a rodeo, you fucking do it differently at a rodeo then you'd do at a club

Robby: Rodeos are dirty man, rodeos are just (inaud.), rodeo is an institute of sex

Will: Rodeos you walk up and go 'hey'

Robby: Basically everyone just goes there and your (inaud.) of the night, you jump in someone's swag, you root 'em, next morning you just go

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

Sach: like (...) when I haven't been in like a serious relationship with someone and I've gone out, a lot of the time I don't really care, like if, if, I'm, if, if the girl (...) achieves anything or if I'm, I'm actually doing anything right, cause that's not, like I'm not (...) really interested, like I'm probably there just for the act, as opposed to anything else. Like there's no sort of emotion or (...) ahmm. (...) Yeah like I just don't feel that I need to go that far, like, like I don't need to make that extra effort cause ahmm at the end of the day (...) ahh I don't think I'll be seeing them, or it's no longer term thing

(Individual interview - age 25 & single.)

Just-sex has limited possibilities, as in the first extract above: “jump in someone’s swag, you root ‘em, next morning you just go”. Implicit in this notion of no future is no responsibility to the woman - “you just go” and “I don’t think I’ll be seeing them”. In the second extract, this lack of responsibility to the woman extends to her sexual pleasure. This is important, as it was clear from the representations discussed in Chapter 5 that within the hegemonic account of male sexuality, men were responsible for women’s sexual pleasure. Where just-sex is concerned however, part of what defines it is the lack of responsibility, because men are “there for the act”,

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for the physical satisfaction of their own sexual need. That men want sex, nothing but sex, nothing more than sex, from women was the central notion of the just-sex account. It is possible to read this framing of women’s sexual satisfaction as irrelevant as a resistance to the male sexual skill discourse discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, with its onerous demands for men to exert considerable control over their own sexual drive and sexual body, and to prioritise women’s sexual satisfaction. Perhaps more importantly, the sexual skill discourse gives women considerable power to determine whether a man’s performance of the practices of heterosex were adequate or competent, and so bestow on them the position of powerful Other who confers existence (Butler, 1997). Arguably, much of the work that the single men undertook within this theme was oriented to denying women’s control over sex; denying them the position of the Other who bestows recognition. This was often accomplished through the enactment of the sex as physical truth, where man is oriented to sex as a physical act and woman is reduced to the object that satisfies male desire.

Two narratives are examined in more detail below, both from single men. The accounts are marked by considerable surveillance of both self and others; regulating the meaning of sex requires constant vigilance. Both narratives are also marked by the acknowledgement of emotional discomfort. This was usually at the point of conflict between two discourses; for example, often the have/hold and male sex drive discourses. Within the narratives, the emotional discomfort is implicitly attributed to the loss of control over the significance or meaning of sex. Losing control over meaning was often positioned as resulting in emotional harm to women; paradoxically, maintaining control - to avoid emotional hurt - required the silencing of women’s voices, for it was women who were construed as wanting to impose meaning.

*Jack’s ambivalence*

The first detailed analysis is of an interaction that took place in a focus group with young (19-21 years) single men. The discussion is around casual sex. There are two storylines in this narrative. The first is around Jack’s ambivalent submission to the truths of male sexuality.
Robbie: Okay, we'll go through the pub pick up, the one-nighter, what are you looking for in that?
Jack: Nothing
Will: Someone who's half decent looking, and really won't give a shit and you probably won't see after that
Matt: Yeah
Will: And it's so easy at the end of the day, (inaud.) leaving straight afterward
Jack: I can't do that. If I sleep with a bird, I have to be fucking friends with them the next day
Hassad: But what if you forget her name the next day
All: (laughter)
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

In the extract above, Will describes the just-sex scenario - no future/no responsibility - and his mastery of it: he finds it easy to leave after the sex. Jack does not find it so easy. Although he wants nothing from the interaction - the physical is taken for granted and so a tacit desire - he can’t enact this, he has to be “fucking friends”.
Jack’s need to be friends signals his failure: just-sex “the one-nighter” is restricted to no future and no investment. His swearing makes it clear that being friends is not a desirable state. While Will positions himself as a competent subject, Jack positions himself as failure. This first storyline continues in the next extract.

Jack: Whatever the circumstance, whatever the outcomes, I cannot walk away, I've done it fucking countless of times (doubt) and it just feels like shit
Will: I can't wait to get back and tell the boys
Robbie: The next morning, you talk to her, you smile, you kiss her goodbye n' stuff, you give her your number, or you get her number. And the rest of the time they just look at you and they go 'yeah, well, you're not as good looking as I thought you were, but you did the job'
Hassad: It's not the base of a fucking relationship, you got drunk the night before and decided to go have a shag, 'Oh yeah, this is definitely gonna last'
Robbie: As long as she doesn't wake up and she's like bawling
All: (laughter)
Robbie: 'What the fuck did I just do'
Jack: You sit there, you just had a great night together, you take her back to your bedroom, you start getting it on. She's says 'look, I don't sleep around' or 'I don't fuck blokes on the first date' I say, I reckon that's sweet, just lay down, massages and bloody (demonstrates hands walking) just have a great night all night. And the next day, just as long as you bloody bring it on, saying oh that's sweet, an establishment (doubt), before you start anything, just say, you know, I want a girlfriend, I don't want a girlfriend, I'm not interested in this. As long as you make it clear the night before. Then it should sweet. As long as you bring it on with them in some stage in some sort of level the next day, I'm sweet. There's no way that I can just fuck someone and just turn away and walk away, that's just fucked

Robbie: (inaud.) (…) at this stage of our lives what do we do? where do we go for a social life? Pubs (…) (inaud.)

Matt: If you're honest with them, they respond to it, you know. Even if they are really keen on you, and you say, 'look I'm not really that keen on a relationship.' They go 'Okayyy'

Robbie: As long as it's mutual man

Matt: As long as you're honest, it's fine. They want (doubt) sex as much as we do

Hassad: Half these girls (doubt) just wanna have sex

Robbie: As long as it's a mutual feeling, I'm not gonna fuck some chick unless she wants me to

(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

Jack reintroduces the topic by positioning himself as someone who has often - “countless” - behaved in a way in keeping with the just-sex account; a key signifier of hetero-sexual man. He then positions himself again as failing to accomplish just-sex, “cannot walk away”, and as failing to master his own feelings, “feels like shit”. For Jack, walking away, something required to render the sex just-sex, is something that produces negative feelings in him. However, even his achievement of a key signifier of hetero-sexual man, does not allow him the space to question the practices required in just-sex. Will recognises the admission of failure, his statement that he will “tell the boys” suggests it is male peers who bestow recognition. This has been
The second storyline concerns the practices available to men to ensure women do not misconstrue the meaning of sex: “bring it on, saying oh that’s sweet, an establishment”, “before you start anything, just say”, “make it clear the night before” and “as long as you’re honest”. Common to each is the notion of clarifying what sex signifies: there is a sense that the articulation of the meaning of sex - as just-sex - is sufficient to fix its meaning. What is noticeably absent is any negotiation; men tell women that it is just-sex and women (apparently) accept this. This is a finding echoed by previous research with young single men (J. Crawford et al., 1994). Clarification is necessary because there are other meanings available. Within the have/hold discourse, sex signifies commitment, relationship, and connection. The practices described by the men prevent this signification and the potential negative consequences if/when they fail to fulfil women’s expectations. The establishment of sex as just-sex can be read as resistance to the have/hold discourse, “I don’t want a relationship”, and the expectations men become subject to if they are positioned within it.

What is largely unsaid is the consequence for men of not clarifying the meaning of sex. This second storyline suggests that through these practices men avoid the negative feelings produced by their successful submission. Achieving (or maintaining) just-sex requires men position the encounter as having no meaning or future, it requires they feel no connection or responsibility (or at least suppress). Moreover, it requires devaluing woman. Jack’s ambivalence, “it just feels like shit” and “that’s just fucked”, is in response to this framing. Jack does not suggest why this produces negative feelings; the analysis in the next section speculates further on this. One possible reading is that not clarifying seems likely to allow a woman to believe the sex is the start of a relationship or that she is entitled to expectations. The danger for men is that they will be positioned as bastards, leading a women on by allowing her to think a relationship was a possibility when really all he wanted was sex. An alternative positioning of woman in the group narrative supports this. The articulation of the permissive discourse - “[They want] sex as much as we do”, “Half [these girls] just wanna have sex” and “you did the job” - makes women equally
responsible for sex and precludes attributing their motivations as intelligible with the have/hold discourse.

Jim’s failure

This second analysis is of a narrative from a single man in his mid-30s, which is constructed around his inability to successfully do one-night-stands.

Jim: and I thought she was starting to, because it was, like, just the, you know. First time I'd tried it, it was like (in the end) we'll just be friends and we'll just have sex a lot and stuff like that and ahmm. And I, I felt that she was wanting more. Ahmm and the interesting things is, cos I can't do bloody one-night-stands. I can't, I end up marrying them, you know I. (I: (laughter)) It's like can't leave the next day, I've got to (...) keep coming back and be nice and make sure that (...) like I get all their approval and things

[...]

Jim: She said something else and it was about one-night-stands and it was like, this, you know, this should have just been a one-night-stand, or ahmm but you couldn't do that, could you

[...]

Jim: you know cos, ahmm, I don't know, maybe I should (...). See maybe, maybe the thing is (...) (laughter) that I only yeah, I only even try for a one-night-stand with girls that I do like (I: Hmm) instead of good looking bitches

(Individual interview - age 35 & single.)

The conventional positioning of men and women is evident - women want more than just-sex and men just want sex. In Jim’s story, he fails to limit the interaction to just-sex. He lists the practices that signal his failure: “end up marrying them”, “can’t leave the next day”, “keep coming back” and “be nice”. Most of these practices are part of the have/hold discourse, they signify a meaning beyond the just-sex, where sex is part of a caring committed relationship. He identifies a further failing later in the interview - he picks women he likes. It was clear in earlier characterisations of just-sex, that it is an activity to be engaged in with women men do not like, “good looking bitches”, or do not want to know (certainly they do not want marry them). In
Jim’s narrative, he fails to master the practices that signify him as a competent subject within this account of male sexuality.

Much later in the interview, Jim returned to this theme; his friends - the cricket club boys - are successful at picking up women for casual sex.

Jim: the cricket club boys ahmm (...) yeah watching them, them out at play (I: Hmm) that, that's a a real lesson, you know, no fear (...) 
I: do you think there is no fear?
Jim: And the other one is ahh, yeah, yeah, I'm sure there's, there's a fear, but they're particularly good at hiding it (I: Hmm) ahmm
I: so are they, are they successful (...) 
Jim: ahmm (...) certainly, certainly in the early part (...) I, I think so. You know, and in ways that I don't feel like I am. Take (...) the situation I'm thinking of particularly is ahmm, you know, at, ahh, at a club or pub scene (...) and going up and talking to girls cold or (...) ahmm. I mean which just freaks me out, I'll jump off a building before I do that (...) ahh (...). I've gone so (doubt) into fear just thinking about it, that I've forgotten what I was talking about
[...]
Jim: yeah I really feel like that's, I really get on my case about not being able to do that (I: Hmm) that that, to me that makes me less of a bloke, yeah. Yeah [...]
I: yeah, and when you say its something that you get on your case (...) I mean is that something that you want, I mean
Jim: it would be nice to have the option
I: yep ok
Jim: ahmm and I'd like to that (...). Yeah
I: would you like to be able to do it or would you like to be doing it
Jim: I don't know whether I'd like to be doing it until I've done it. (laughter)
So (I: (laughter)) but I think I would like to be doing it, ahmm basically ahmm. Yeah it's funny, I, I'm sure that I would sabotage that. Ahmm because (...) there's some really hard and nasty bits about that that, that I don't like (I:
Hmm) ahh, you know, and that I would try and make right and I'd end up meeting the parents and patting the dog
(Individual interview - age 35 & single.)

Jim attributes his friend’s success at one-night-stands to their lack of fear. On being questioned, he reinterprets this as an ability to hide their fear, a fear related to the threat of rejection or humiliation. He is unable to do this, indeed, he is so fearful he’d “jump off a building before I do that”. His inability to master his own fear, and so pick up women, makes him feel like “less of a bloke”. A hetero-sexual man should want casual sex and be able to chat-up women. Further, there is the concomitant positioning of woman as passively waiting to be chatted up: the barrier is Jim’s fear and not women’s lack of sexual interest in him.

The final extract above makes explicit a contradiction evident throughout Jim’s narrative. On the one hand, he positions himself as wanting just-sex - picking up women for causal encounters, restricting the friendship to just-sex. His inability to achieve this makes him feel “less of a bloke”. These practices constitute what it means to be a man; he must take these up as the truths about himself if he wants to be recognisable as an appropriate subject. On the other hand, he describes the various behaviours/practices, which he positions as failure, that contradict this desire and so make him unrecognisable as a hetero-sexual man within hegemonic male sexuality. Indeed, he suggests he may actively prevent the desired just-sex from occurring: “I would sabotage that”. Jim explains his sabotage as related to the consequences of casual sex: there are “really hard and nasty bits” that he dislikes. The subsequent remedying practises - meeting the parents and patting the dog - again signal his failure. Although he wants to be having just-sex, the practices required of him are unacceptable to him. The question of why they are unacceptable is less clear.

The remedying practices can be understood within the have/hold discourse, his earlier statement that the woman was “wanting more” reinforces this. These practices can be read as giving her more; he fulfilled the expectations of being positioned in the have/hold discourse. However, Jim does not specify that the “hard and nasty bits” are connected to the woman, nor does he specify his making right is concerned with the woman. Is it possible to read the wrong as something Jim has done to himself?
Arguably, recognition as a hetero-sexual male subject means denying other desires; for example, the desire for connection and continuation. The practices he describes do suggest prolonging the relationship beyond just-sex. Moreover, the sabotaging practices allow Jim not to have casual sex. This raises a question of whether it is possible (discursively) for Jim as a single man, particularly in the company of other men, to not want casual sex. Being a man, “a bloke”, means both wanting to have and actually seeking casual sex, which includes mastering his fear and engaging in practices he positions as undesirable.

It is clear from the account of just-sex that this requires a lack of interest in any particular woman - the focus is on the sex. To have no fear of rejection means not caring if any particular woman rejects him, that is, not investing anything in a woman. Yet Jim’s behaviour suggests investment; the practices he describes - being nice, coming back, meeting her parents, etc - all signal an interest in the woman, a recognition of her as an other subject with her own feelings and desires. Being a successful hetero-sexual man, according to the account Jim gives, would mean not undertaking these practices, or substituting these for other practices; chiefly, denying her subjectivity.

In the hetero-sexual subjecthood being sought by these men, there is little room for negotiation. Jim’s failure to master the relevant practices - picking a woman he doesn’t like, hiding his fear, resisting the pressure to look after her (no future/no responsibility) - make it difficult for him to recognise himself as a hetero-sexual man; he felt less of a bloke. Jack’s admission that successfully mastering just-sex, “just feels like shit”, was a declaration that threatened his subjecthood. The problem for Jim, and perhaps less so for Jack, is that the just-sex scenario requires them to carry out practices they recognise as necessary but at the same time position as undesirable (though rarely is this explicit). Jack and Jim handled the ambivalence produce by their submission differently. Jack adopts various strategies to deal with the emotional discomfort the practices produce, yet still manages to enact the required line of action, that is, casual sex. Jim’s submission is problematic, he avoids the appropriate line of action, and pays a price in being unrecognisable to himself as a hetero-sexual man. However, he also avoids having to enact the practices required in the just-sex scenario - the “hard and nasty bits”.

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Wanting more than just-sex

Overall, the men who talked of just-sex are enacting the characteristics of dominant masculinity - independent, unemotional - they do not need or want anything more than sex from their interactions with women. There was a parallel theme that ran through the single men’s interviews: wanting more than just-sex. Many young single men suggested that there was a stage in their life where just-sex was both appropriate and desired and a stage when more than just-sex was both appropriate and desired. This latter stage was almost always talked about in future terms, and represented a shift in focus from a relationship-for-sex to a relationship-with-sex. There are resonances here with some of the representations of male sexuality described the discourse of salvation (Chapter 5): being single was appropriate for young men, but not for older men. Indeed, there was an implication in these representations that if men got older and continued to resist the inevitable commitment to a woman, they would be sad, isolated and desperate.

The following extracts illustrate the something more account:

Burton: My ideal? Well my ideal would be like sex (...) sex and relationships (...) is to have someone who you are comfortable with and just to have sex with that person because that is the most gratifying thing compared to just having casual sex with people which is not fun at all (Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)

Jack: I'd prefer to do it with, bloody, one person that I fucking love being with, lay in bed, just fucking, just (...) (Hassad: (inaud.)) loves fucking, everything, is experimenting with you, you're experimenting with her, and you just get on like a house on fire, and just have a mad time together (Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

Sach: I guess the thing is that I'm sort of, I look at this girl and I think, oh wow, you know, you are some one I could probably be really, really serious about and possible even marry (...)
Sach: this relationship is like, WOW, you're like (...) I feel heaps comfortable with you (...) compatibility seems really good, and ahmm we're both (...) eager to please each other and like (...) what we've done so far is fantastic, and I think (...) it's sort of like, the whole cake as opposed to just a bit of it (laughing) (I: yes) it icing and everything so yeah, it's ahmm yea, its, that's what makes it different to me
(Individual interview - age 25 & single.)

The focus in this theme was not on sex with any woman, but on sex with a particular woman, someone the man felt comfortable and happy with. Men referred to having knowledge of the woman, trust, and a desire to please. Within this account, sex has meaning, indeed, it was “deep and meaningful”. There are references to emotions and feelings that are conspicuously absent in the just-sex theme. There is also an assumption of a shared future together. For example, in the extract from Sach, the just-sex discourse is evoked but found wanting; what he aspires to is sex and a relationship. These characteristics contrast with the no future/no responsibility/no expectation of the just-sex account described above.

The concept of life stages, which evokes a sense of a natural order, was an important part of this account, as in evident in the next extract:

Malik: sex is good and sex as much as you can get, and you know up to a certain stage you know you move on up to the stage when sex means more than just sex
[...]
Victor: [...] Umm with ourselves, I guess it really depends where you think you are, at which stage in your life you are in and some people may be more emotionally mature at certain stages, so their needs and expectations as mentioned before, are probably different. Sex may not just be a physical thing for them, whereas for other people at that stage it may well be. And I think that for a lot of men later on its part (...) it may become part of their relationships not just (inaud.) a relationship that was just sex
(Group interview - ages 24-26 & single.)
A developmental model of male sexuality was often evoked in this account, where being young, or sometimes lacking maturity, was associated with a desire for “just sex”, “for fun”. Men progressed - matured, developed - to a stage where “sex means more than just sex” or “may not just be a physical thing”. In a study with young men aged 15-18, Redman (2001) reports that adopting a romantic discourse was part of making a more adult identity. In some of the extracts Redman cites, these new adult relationships are distinguished from earlier childish relationships, not by physical characteristics but by “closeness and the experience of being in love” (p. 190). Such that, “the boys investments in serious romance - with its emphasis on the connotatively adult attributes of commitment, mutuality emotional intimacy, and penetrative sex - can be understood as part of their attempt to work themselves into a new age-related cultural identity” (p. 191).

For some men it was not maturity or age that was positioned as producing a shift in their focus, they described having met someone that they wanted a relationship with. This is evident in the extract above from Sach. In one of the young men’s focus groups, there was a fear that if they met ‘the one’ and had just-sex, they may miss out.

Matt: One thing, when you meet a bird though you'll have a preconception, one-way or the other. You'll think from the start, one of the first things relationship or non-relationship
Hassad: That's true
Matt: You're never gonna know until you actually get to meet ’em, but the thing is you're always going to have a preconception and that can fuck you up royally. You might meet the greatest chick in the world, but you go 'no, I just want to fuck her'
(Group interview - ages 19-21 & single.)

It appears then that once a woman or sexual encounter has been designated just-sex, it cannot be undone. Throughout these extracts there is the hint of the Madonna/Whore dichotomy (Ussher, 1997b); for example in the positioning of some women as for sex (women men do not like, do not want to get to know), and others
as suitable for marriage (this is explicit in the extract from Sach), and in the notion that once designate ‘whore’ a woman can never be redeemed.

The articulation of more-than-just-sex was for many men a future fantasy, most of the single men in this study were focused on trying to keep sex at the just level. Active resistance to sex being construed as more than physical typified these accounts. The silencing of the woman’s voice (and subjectivity) was also common; indeed, it appeared necessary. In many of these accounts, men were unequivocal about what sex signified - nothing - and that this is what they desired. It was manifest that they did want something - but only ever the act of sex - but it is a crucial element of this account, and indeed common throughout the interviews, that men construe this want as nothing. That is, if a man does not want anything but sex from a woman - and that can be obtained from any woman - then he is not dependent on her. Nor is he vulnerable in the face of her power to grant or refuse his subjecthood.

7.3. Discussion

This analysis demonstrated men’s active negotiation of the conditions of possibility that the hegemonic truths described in the previous chapter constitute, and how they (re)produced themselves as recognisable subjects. This is the process of subjection. This examined the work men must do to become a recognisable subject, the discursive and material practices they must master, the meanings and knowledges they must take up as their own. An important feature of this analysis was an exploration of the difficulties, dilemmas and ambivalences produced by the project of subjection, and of how men resolve or accommodate them. A recurring issue, in accounts from both single men and men in relationships, was the positioning of women as powerful, through their control over sex, and men’s concomitant experience of powerlessness. In this analysis, it was argued that the desire for recognition, as a subject, was allied to the experience of powerlessness in the face of woman’s control over sex.

What is clearly evident in this analysis is that the experience of a biological drive for sex was not sufficient to guarantee the men interviewed in this study a hetero-sexual
subjectivity. Thus, one of the most significant implications of this analysis is to demonstrate that becoming a hetero-sexual male subject, and remaining recognisable as one, is neither a simple or straightforward undertaking. It is a risky and continuous project of (re)producing the appropriate knowledges about the self, of enacting the appropriate practices of male sexuality, of regulating meaning such that undesirable or threatening significations are suppressed. The precarious nature of sexual subjectivity - men’s tenuous hold on their subjecthood - was often demonstrated in the focus group interviews, where men challenged each other’s mastery of relevant practices, and in men’s accounts where women also threatened to expose lack of mastery. It was also evident in the work men embarked on to address the implications of a lack of sex in their relationships. The meaning of sex, and who is in a position to regulate it, is central to this. The considerable work that men undertook to remain in a position to determine the meaning of sex is a testament to this.

Moreover, there are significant implications for men when they fail to regulate the meaning of sex, that is, when alternative undesirable discourses prevail. In the case of single men, there were undesirable consequences - specifically expectations and responsibilities - if sex became understood within the have/hold discourse.

A post-structuralist theorisation of ‘the subject’ means that there is no escape from discourse; there is no possibility to be free from the regimes of knowledge within which subjectivity is constituted. That is “individuals come to occupy the site of the subject … and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language” (Butler, 1997, p. 11). This is not a deterministic position. Within the regimes of knowledge are a multiplicity of meanings around sexuality and sex (Hollway, 1984) that create the possibility of change, and resistance (Davies, 1997; Gavey, 1989). If we recall, within the theory of positioning, “the possibility of choice in a situation in which there are contradictory requirements provides people with the possibility of acting agentially” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 59).

In light of the different discourse and truths that have be described in this thesis so far, it is interesting to consider what agentic male sexuality might be. Would the rejection of the need for sexual skill or a refusal to control the sexual drive, constitute an agentic act? In many of the accounts presented above, the enacting and resisting
of subject positions in various discourses was discussed. In the regulating the meaning of sex theme, for example, men repeatedly took up a position in the male sexual drive discourse and resisted the have/hold discourse. Is enacting the male sex drive discourse necessarily a genetic; if it is the prevailing discourse of male sexuality, is there any sense of an active taking up of this position? It is possible to read one participant’s account, Ramu’s failed attempt to have intercourse with his partner, in this way. In explicitly prioritising his sexual drive he may have resisted the skilful discourse, which makes him responsible for his partner’s sexual experience, requires him to prioritise her needs, and exert control over his drive.

Louisa Allen suggests that resistance to dominant discourses of heterosexuality in the young men she interviewed was indicated by their assertion that they would stay in their relationship “even without sexual activity” (2003a, p. 227). It is interesting to speculate on how these young men would account for this if the situation transpired. The findings reported above suggest that men in relationships stayed in them - “even without sexual activity” - but it is clear that this situation required men undertake considerable accounting if they are to remain recognisable as hetero-sexual male subjects. Moreover, in the detailed analysis of one single man’s (Jim) narrative of regulating the meaning of sex, the male sex drive was resisted but at considerable cost to himself: he was no longer a recognisable subject. Thus, it was difficult to read an agentic male sexual subjectivity - where the male sexual drive discourse was resisted - in most of the accounts presented in this analysis. Indeed most of the resistant subject positions that were adopted were oriented to the perceived sexual control of women. It was very rare for men to explicitly and actively resist the hegemonic account of male sexuality, and in particular the male sex drive - though some did appear to accommodate it.

The analysis presented here suggests that the male sex drive remains a very powerful and largely unquestioned truth about men’s sexuality. The dearth of accounts of resistance in the analysis presented here however should not necessarily be understood as indicative of the impossibility of resistance to hegemonic male sexuality. I would suggest that the absence is in part a product of methodological issues. The focus of this analysis was neither on resistance of the hegemonic account, nor on men’s adoption of non-hegemonic accounts (a good example of this kind of
work is L. Allen, 2003a). This analysis was explicitly concerned with men becoming recognisable sexual subjects and this requires they take up a recognisable account of hetero-sexual-man, that is, the hegemonic account. An analysis of agentic male sexuality would be both interesting and valuable. In addition, it would be worth exploring the accounts of men currently positioned within the hegemonic account, as in the current analysis, by comparing them to men positioned outside it. Although how one might identify heterosexual men positioned outside the hegemonic account is a problematic notion; whilst some men may resist it\(^{34}\), all men are positioned in relation to it. One strategy would be to follow up a recruitment issue raised in Chapter 4, that is, to look at accounts from men who have engaged in critical reflexive work around their sexuality, for example those in men’s groups.

A second implication of this analysis was the reiteration of the significance of looking across men, rather than simply at the differences between men and women. The experience of sexuality, and the practices and meanings available to young single men, were often significantly different to those required of older men in relationships. The contexts in which men are negotiating the hegemonic truths of male sexuality are important. Moreover, a great deal of previous discursive work has focused on younger single men (Chapter 3). The analysis presented above suggests that the work required of older men in long-term relationships to maintain a recognisable subjecthood is quite different to that required of single men. The account of heterosexual male sexuality described by the men in this study was often that of a young and single man, interested in sex with anyone not sex with one person, free to move on to the next woman when rejection or boredom (or meaning) threatened. Moreover, for the single men, much of their regulation was around avoiding the signification of sex within the have/hold discourse, where most men in relationships are already positioned within the have/hold discourse.

As was alluded to in the literature review (Chapter 3), there has been a dearth of discursive work on heterosexual men’s sexuality, where men are the focus, though there are notable exceptions (Flood, 2001a, 2001b; Wight, 1993, 1994, 1996). A great deal of the literature reviewed in that chapter focused on the implications for

\(^{34}\) If the protestations of my women colleagues are anything to go by, there are many heterosexual men who are resisting this account - at least in the ways they represent themselves to my colleagues.
women of men’s negotiation of discourses around sexuality. The analysis undertaken here however, consciously avoided focusing on the implications for women of the positions men took up. Men’s solutions to the contradictions and dilemmas they faced in taking themselves up as appropriate subjects, clearly have consequences for women and for men’s negotiation of sexual relationships with women. One example of this was men’s positioning of women within the have/hold discourse, in the regulating of just-sex, which denied women access to progressive discourses around sexual desire; there was a silence around women desiring just-sex. It would be worthwhile examining the work men and women engage in together to resolve the tensions and dilemmas described in the current analysis, perhaps along the lines of Paul Stenner’s (1993) exploration of a couple’s construction of jealousy.

In their critical reflection on their own subjectification as schoolgirls Davies et al. (2001), suggest that with the repetitive performance of the appropriate rituals, the subject can establish themselves in relations of power where the likelihood of not being recognised become less and less. Can the same be said of men’s sexual subjecthood? It would seem, in the accounts examined here, that the sexual subjectivity of the older men in relationships was not any less precarious than that of the younger single men. One might expect that men in relationships are perhaps insulated to some extent; indeed previous research suggests that both single men and younger men experience more sexual anxiety (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998), a finding repeated in the survey study reported in Chapter 8. It may be that in an interview situation men are called to account for their subjectivity in a way which is not typical of their everyday lives. There is another possible methodological explanation. Only a few of the men in this study presented accounts of a satisfied relationship, and many speculated about ending their relationships. This may suggest a high concentration in the interview sample of men unhappy in their relationships.

A final methodological point worth raising was the value of adopting mixed methods in this analysis. The data produced across the interviewing stages was rich and incredibly diverse. It seems clear that there were issues that were discussed in the individual interviews, particularly the narrative interviews, which would have been incredibly difficult for men to address in a group. Equally, there were issues that were raised by men together, and sometimes challenges made, that I, both as an
interviewer and as a woman, either could not or would not have broached. The individual interviews may have been a ‘safe’ space, in that an interviewer may have been perceived as less judgemental, than the often contested space of the focus groups. Whilst the group contexts may have created a sense of shared experience, where men felt supported and encouraged by the stories of others; this was likely enhanced by pre-existing relationships between groups members and the peer interviewers. Thus, both individual and groups methods were valuable. Moreover utilising different interviewers also proved valuable; the peer interviewers were very differently positioned across ethnicity, age, relationship contexts, and social class. Although only one peer interviewer was male, the flavour of this interview was quite different to the others.

7.4. Summary

In this chapter, theories of subjectification were drawn on to understand the process whereby men constitute a sexual subjectivity. This analysis explored the process of subjection, how men actively negotiated - took up and resisted - the hegemonic truths of male sexuality and their allied practices. The contradictions, dilemmas, and struggles that were produced in the process of subjectification were also explored. Enacting the hegemonic truths that men want sex/more sex, and that sex is a physical experience, were central in the first theme where sex was framed as a commodity. Men gave accounts of the work they did to obtain sex - mastery of bodies and feelings, and demonstrating a skilful male sexuality. Women were positioned as the gatekeepers in this theme, in that they determined whether men had successfully mastered the appropriate practices and thus granted access to sex, or not.

Particular attention was paid to how subjection as hetero-sexual male subject required different work from men in relationships, compared to single men. For single men successful subjection entailed the regulation of the meaning of sex in sexual interactions with women, such that men remained constituted as desiring sex and not a relationship, and the sex remained framed as meaningless. For men in relationships, a central task of successful subjection was accounting for the lack of sexual activity such that they remained constituted as desiring male subjects. For
most this meant attributing the lack of sex to their partner, thus drawing on the hegemonic truth that men and women’s sexuality is different.

The analysis presented in this chapter addressed the second research question: how are different ways of understanding heterosexual male sexuality taken up and resisted by individual men to give meaning to their experience of themselves, their bodies, their desires and their relations with women? It also began to address the third research question: what are the consequences of the different ways of understanding sex and sexuality for men? The quantitative analysis in the following chapter will continue the exploration of this last research question.
CHAPTER 8. Hegemonic Male Sexuality and Male Sexuality: A Survey Study

The chief difficulty with the fantasy model of sex is that it establishes standards for the ways things ought to be, standards that ignore individual differences and that are highly unrealistic, thus setting the stage for disappointment and frustration when reality doesn’t match the model… some of us have great difficulty letting go of the fantasy (Zilbergeld, 1978, p. 68-69)

This chapter reports on a survey study that examined the relationship between the hegemonic representation of male sexuality and men’s subjective accounts of their experience of sex and sexuality. Here, hegemonic male sexuality is not treated as a role but as one account that is culturally available to men, to give meaning to their sexuality and sexual experiences. The characteristics of this account are those articulated by Bernie Zilbergeld (1978; 1999) as part of the fantasy model of male sexuality, characteristics that resonate with many of the representations described in the previous chapters. This account positions emotional sharing or vulnerability as undesirable, and denies the emotional and intimacy needs of men. Sex is positioned as a performance, a task to be achieved. According to Zilbergeld this is connected to the role of sex in proving masculinity. Thus, quantifying, for example through frequency, becomes important for judging whether a man is meeting the goals of hegemonic male sexuality. Sexuality becomes goal driven, focusing on specific goals like intercourse and orgasm. An erection becomes mandatory for sex, and orgasm the
outcome by which a successful performance is measured. Sex has not been successful, nor can it end, until an orgasm is produced. It is notable that women’s orgasm is now also obligatory within this model, such that men are not only responsible for sex but for women’s pleasure. Within this account women become the passive recipient of men’s skill and knowledge. Connected to this is the notion that all physical contact leads to sex - a further articulation of the notion that men do not desire any physical contact unless it is sex.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this model of sexuality is the notion that men always want sex, not physical or emotional intimacy or connection, just sex. This was one of the most common and unquestioned representations of male sexuality described in the analysis of magazines (Chapter 5). It is unimaginable that men would turn down a sexual opportunity, which Zilbergeld (1978; 1999) argues can lead to sexual problems. Finally, sex is positioned as a natural and instinctive phenomenon, where one thing simply leads to another. This is an evocative of the biological model of sex where “copulation is a series of reflexes” (Le Vay, 1993, p. 48). In the fantasy model, male sexuality is natural, simple and unproblematic, consisting of erection, intercourse, orgasm; all of which is understood as separate to any emotional context.

In the current study, the first aim of the survey analysis was to examine the relationship between men’s endorsement of the account of male sexuality described by Zilbergeld, and outlined above, and their accounts of their experience of their sexuality. Men’s subjective experience was measured across the four dimensions of sexuality discussed in the Chapter 2: sexual satisfaction, sexual interaction and communication, sexual functioning, and unwanted sexual activity.

Where do men get information about sex and sexuality? In what contexts are men exposed to sexual knowledge? Do they have different experiences of their sexuality in relation to the sources of knowledge? These questions emanate from a number of issues raised in Chapters 2 and 3. Previous research has demonstrated how important popular culture is as a source of knowledge for young people, and that different media - television, music, erotica - appeared to have different impacts on sexuality. Much of this research focused on young people and only examined behavioural
outcomes. Other research reviewed examined the impact of pornography, but tended to focus on attitudes and behaviour toward women. The current survey analysis looks across a variety of domains - popular culture, erotica, medical, friends and intimate relationships - and attempts to identify patterns in men’s reported accessing of these domains for information and knowledge about sex and sexuality. Whilst we would expect some domains to contain a broad range of representations, others, for example erotica, may contain limited or extreme representations of male sexuality. The different domains also have different ways of interacting associated with them; how do men access knowledge about sexuality, for example, watching television or erotic movies versus talking to a partner or friend. Thus the second aim of this survey analysis, was to explore the relationship between men’s accounts of their sexuality and sources of sexual knowledge across specific domains.

In the review of the literature in Chapters 2 and 3, it was noted that age was rarely explored as an issue, though most research studies used samples consisting of younger, usually College attending, men. Similarly, samples were usually homogenous in terms of relationship status, that is, they consisted of single and casually dating men only, or men in committed or married relationships only, but rarely both. The participants that constitute the sample used in the current analysis are drawn from across relationship contexts and include a very broad range of ages. Thus, the third aim of this analysis is to consider age and relationship status in relation to the two aims set out above. In the first, age and relationship status will be included in the statistical analysis; in the second descriptives will be included for age and relationship status, as it is not appropriate to include these two variables in this exploratory analysis.

The analysis presented in this chapter addresses the third research question driving this study: what are the consequences for men of different ways of understanding male sexuality. It does this by examining three questions:

- What is the relationship between men’s endorsement of the account of male sexuality described by Zilbergeld, and men’s accounts of their experience of their sexuality?
- What is the relationship between men’s accounts of their experience of their sexuality and sources of sexual knowledge across specific domains?
• In relation to these two questions, what is the importance of age and relationship status?

8.1. Method

Survey design and development

This survey study used a self-report instrument and comprised seven sections, which are described in detailed below. The survey went through several stages of development, and feedback was sought from the study partner, FPA Health. Ethics approval was sought from the University of Western Sydney Human Ethics Committee. After piloting with a small convenience sample, two minor changes were made to the survey. A duplicate question was removed, and a question asking participants if they had received help completing the survey was added. A fixed format was used for the survey due to the potentially sensitive nature of the questions; the least sensitive topic (source of knowledge) was the first section, and most sensitive (the sexual dysfunction and unwanted sexual activity questions) were placed last. The survey took between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. A copy of the final survey is in Appendix D.1. Each section of the survey and the measures used is described below.

Sexual satisfaction

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrated that a number of factors are relevant to sexual satisfaction, chiefly relationship and physical factors. Three measures addressing these factors were used in the sexual satisfaction section of the survey.

The questionnaire developed as part of the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS) (Lawrance & Byers, 1992, 1995) contains several sub-scales, two of which were used in this analysis of male sexuality (see Chapter 2 for a description of this model). The two sub-scales have been widely used, as part of the IEMSS, with college and non-college samples, and with individuals in long-term
relationships (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Lawrance & Byers, 1992, 1995; Renaud et al., 1997). The first sub-scale is Sexual Relationship Satisfaction (GMSex), this measures satisfaction with a current sexual relationship. This requires participants to indicate their satisfaction on five bipolar scales, using a 7-point scale. The bipolar scales are good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, positive-negative, satisfying-dissatisfying, and valuable-worthless. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 35 for subsequent analysis; a higher score indicates a higher level of satisfaction. The GMSex scale has high test-retest reliability (2 week \( r = .84 \), 3 month \( r = .78 \)), and has been demonstrated to have good internal consistency on a number of samples - student sample .90, community sample .96 (Lawrance & Byers, 1995).

Relationship satisfaction has been shown to be an important aspect of sexual satisfaction (Byers et al., 1998; Cupach & Metts, 1991; Farley & Davis, 1980; Gebhard, 1966; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Przybyla & Byrne, 1981; M. Young et al., 1998). The second sub-scale, General Relationship Satisfaction (GMRel), measures satisfaction with a current relationship (Lawrance & Byers, 1992, 1995). This is exactly the same as the GMSex scale but asks participants to indicate their satisfaction with their relationship in general. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 35 for subsequent analysis; a higher score indicates a higher level of reported satisfaction. The GMRel scale has good test-retest reliability (2 week \( r = .81 \), 3 month \( r = .70 \)), and has been demonstrated to have high internal consistency on a number of samples - student sample .96, community sample .91(Lawrance & Byers, 1995).

Physical aspects of sexual activity are also important factors in sexual satisfaction (Bentler & Peeler, 1979; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Darling et al., 1991; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Perlman & Abramson, 1982; Waterman & Chiauzzi, 1982; M. Young et al., 1998; Zhou, 1993). A scale developed by Young et al. (1998), the Sexual Satisfaction Scale (SexSat) was used. This is a shortened version of the Derogatis Sexual Functioning Inventory (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1979). This measure consists of 11 items asking about levels of sexual activity, sexual variety, and sexual satisfaction. Participants indicate their satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. Item scores were summed and averaged to produce a score out of five for subsequent analysis; a higher score
indicates a higher level of reported satisfaction. Young et al. report the internal consistency of this scale as .93.

Filter questions were used to ensure only those participants who where currently in a relationship (GMRel) or a sexual relationship (GMSex and SexSat) answered the appropriate questions. In addition, all participants were asked to indicate if they were happy with the level of sexual activity they were currently engaging in. If participants were not happy, they were asked to indicate - in an open format question - why they are not engaging in the level of sexual activity they desire.

Sexual interaction and communication

Two approaches to researching sexual communication were discussed in Chapter 2. The first, verbal communication, focuses on the verbal disclosure of likes and dislikes. The second approach, sociosexual skills, has greater utility for the current analysis, as it focuses on the way a sexual encounter is negotiated through both verbal communication and behaviour. Further, it is more relevant to men’s sexual behaviour and communication, which has been shown to be less disclosing and more instrumental (Lawrance et al., 1996), and often nonverbal (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). As discussed in the review of this literature (Chapter 2), there has been little quantitative research on sociosexual skills, and much of it is limited to sex offenders.

A set of three scales developed by Vanwesenbeeck, Bekker and van Lenning (1998) offered the most comprehensive approach to examining sociosexual skills. These examine how individuals communicate and interact in sexual situations and include a scale relating to men’s emotional experience in these situations. The Defensive Control Scale (DefCon) consists of six items relating to limit setting behaviour. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 24 for subsequent analysis; a high score on this sub-scale indicates the participant reports using limit setting behaviour such as discussing contraception or what sexual activities they do not like. The Proactive Control Scale (ProCon) consists of four items relating to sexually orchestrating behaviour. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 16 for subsequent analysis; a high score on this sub-scale indicates the participant reports using seductive and controlling behaviour to shape a sexual situation to their
desires. The Anxious Insecurity Scale (AnxIns) consists of 15 items relating to feelings of a lack of control and self-confidence in sexual interactions. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 60 for subsequent analysis; a high score on this sub-scale indicates the participant reports feeling apprehensive or uncertain about their desires, their body and their partner’s desires and so feels a lack of control over sexual situations. For all three scales, participants indicate the frequency with which they have experienced these behaviours or emotions over the previous year, on a 5-point scale: not at all, once, occasionally, regularly, often. Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) report the internal consistency of these scales as .73, .76, and .98 respectively.

In the study that developed these scales, Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) also used a measure of sexual anxiety to explore whether sexual anxiety mediated in sociosexual skills. According to Janda and O’Grady sexual anxiety is a “generalised expectancy for non-specific external punishment for the violation of, or the anticipation of violating, perceived normative standards of acceptable sexual behaviour” (1980, p. 170). Where sexual guilt is concerned with what individuals think of themselves in violating a sexual norm, sexual anxiety is about men’s perceptions of what others think of them; that is, individuals high on sexual anxiety are worried about what others will think of their violation of sexual norms (Janda & O’Grady, 1980). This is relevant to sexual interaction in that it may inhibit communication and behaviour. Sexual anxiety has been shown to be related to interactional incompetence (Fisher, Byrne, White, & Kelley, 1988). Further, the concept of sexual anxiety concerns shared sexual norms, and sociocultural dimensions are likely to be relevant in the establishment of these norms. The Sexual Anxiety Scale (SexAnx) developed by Vanwesenbeeck et al. was used in the current analysis; this is shortened version of the Sex Anxiety Scale (Janda & O’Grady, 1980), and has also been updated to meet contemporary phrasing. The SexAnx scale consists of six items; participants indicate the frequency with which they have experienced emotions over the previous year, on a 5-point scale: not at all, once, occasionally, regularly, often. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 16 for subsequent analysis; a higher score on this sub-scale indicates the participant reports experiencing sexual anxiety. Vanwesenbeeck et al. report the internal consistency of this scale as .79.
Sexual functioning

The review of literature on sexual dysfunction (Chapter 2) demonstrated that most studies of sexual dysfunction have focused on the penis and erectile difficulties, using norms derived from a biomedical model (usually the Human Sexual Response Cycle) to determine the presence or absence of dysfunction. Further, little attention had been given to men’s subjective experience or evaluation of sexual problems. Published measures of sexual dysfunction/function reflect these limitations, and tend to be quite long as they are primarily designed for clinical diagnosis. In addition, many scales used within psychology cover issues that are examined by other scales being used in this analysis. For example, the Sexual History Form (Nowinski & LoPiccolo, 1979) and its modification, Global Sexual Functioning (Creti et al., 1998), contain dimensions relating to sexual communication and satisfaction, and the Derogatis Sexual Functioning Scale (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1979) has dimensions relating to sexual knowledge (measuring the level of accurate knowledge of physiology and anatomy), sex roles and sexual satisfaction. Many measures also include frequency of sexual activity, where lower frequency is indicative of dysfunction (for example the Golombok Rust Inventory of Sexual Satisfaction (Rust & Golombok, 1985)). For these reasons, two Likert scales were used in the current study.

The first Likert scale measured men’s sexual functioning problems (FnProb); participants were asked to indicate how frequently they experienced six problems including a lack of interest in sex or partner, and difficulties with arousal, erection and ejaculation. A 5-point scale was used: not at all, once, occasionally, regularly, often. This scale measured the occurrence of a range of sexual problems. The scale was not designed to ascertain the presence or absence of sexual dysfunction, rather it measures a man’s subjective experience of sexual difficulties or issues. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 24 for subsequent analysis; a higher score indicates sexual problems were experienced more often, as determined by the man himself.

There are differences between a problem with sexual functioning and dissatisfaction with sexual functioning. A man may not perceive himself as experiencing problems
achieving ejaculation but still feel dissatisfied with the quality of his orgasm. This may reflect something the man wishes was better but is not something he would seek help or treatment for. Thus, the second Likert scale explored sexual functioning satisfaction (FnSat); participants indicate their satisfaction with five aspects of their sexual functioning including ability to become aroused and to achieve and control orgasm. A 5-point scale was used: satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied. Item scores were summed to produce a total score between -10 to +10 for subsequent analysis; a higher negative score indicates greater dissatisfaction with sexual functioning and an higher positive score greater satisfaction.

Participants were also asked to indicate if they had ever sought help for a sexual problem, and to describe what help or treatment they had received in an open format question.

Unwanted sexual activity

There has been very little research on men’s participation in unwanted but consensual sexual activity (see Chapter 2). The most comprehensive study used a diary method to track all sexual activity, including unwanted, for a two-week period (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). This method was not viable for the current study which used a single self-report format, however, the questions and wording used in the O’Sullivan and Allgeier study were adapted for this survey. Participants were asked to indicate whether they had ever taken part in unwanted but consensual sexual activity. If they indicated yes, they were directed to questions relating to the frequency with which they had taken part in seven sexual activities ranging from touching and kissing to oral sex and vaginal intercourse (UWtSex). Participants indicated the level of participation on a 5-point Likert scale: not at all, once, occasionally, regularly, often. Item scores were summed to produce a total score out of 28 for subsequent analysis; a higher score indicates a higher frequency of participation in unwanted sexual activities. Participants were also asked to answer three open format questions on the main reason for participating, and any positive or negative consequences.
In comparison to the other sections, this set of questions required the most detailed instructions, as it was imperative that participants understood the difference between consensual and non-consensual unwanted sexual activity (see Chapter 2 for discussion of the difficulties relating to the distinction between these two concepts).

*Endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality*

The aim of this section of the survey was to measure men’s endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality. The scale used was an adapted version of the Stereotypes About Male Sexuality Measure (SAMSS) (Snell, 1998; Snell, Belk, & Hawkins, 1986, 1990; Snell, Hawkins, & Belk, 1988). It measures levels of agreement with a range of statements describing, what Snell et al. call stereotypical male sexual behaviour. The scale draws on the ten myths about male sexuality and the fantasy model of sex described by Zilbergeld (1978; 1999). These ten myths are: men should not have or express feelings; sex is about performance; men are responsible for sex; men always want sex; physical contact leads to sex; sex equals intercourse; sex requires an erection; the goal of sex is orgasm; sex should be natural and spontaneous; men are sexually aware.

The SAMSS produces an overall score for level of agreement with stereotypes of male sexuality, and contains ten subscales each relating to one of the ten myths outlined by Zilbergeld. Separate analysis of the subscales was not conducted in the present study. Snell et al.’s scale was adapted in three ways. There were 60 items in the original, six items for each myth. This was too many for the current analysis where six other sections had to be completed by participants. For each of the myths three of the six items were selected; items were selected on the basis of clarity, contemporary language and to avoid repetition (the wording of some items was quite repetitive). At the request of FPA Health two questions relating to monogamy (item 13) and the duration of sex (item 29) were added; these items were analysed separately. There were also some slight changes to update phraseology and make this American scale appropriate for an Australian sample. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale: agree, slightly agree, neither agree or disagree, slightly disagree, disagree. Item scores were summed to produce a total
score between -30 and +30 for subsequent analysis; a higher positive score indicates greater endorsement and a higher negative score lower endorsement.

The measures used by Baker and De Silva (1988) and Adams et al. (1996) in their studies of sexual dysfunction and sexual myths, were also based on Zilbergeld’s myths. However, the SAMSS is a more comprehensive measure and matches the sexual myths outlined by Zilbergeld more closely. In addition, the SAMSS uses a likert scale (agree-disagree), where the other scales used a criterion referenced true-false format which suggests there is a correct answer.

Sources of sexual knowledge

The focus of this section of the survey was to examine what sources of sexual knowledge men had accessed in the past year, and how often. A number of existing measures were available that related to sexual knowledge and information (Ansuini et al., 1996; Duncan & Donnelly, 1991; Trostle, 1993). However, these measures are limited in their focus, either to first or most important source of information, or to official sources like parents, teachers, and peers whilst excluding potential sources like pornography. Therefore, a specific measure (SexRep) was developed for use in this analysis, to identify how often men were engaged in activities where they were exposed to knowledge about sex and sexuality. Men were asked to indicate on a frequency scale ranging from never to daily, how often they engaged in a particular activity over the past year; twenty-two sources were grouped according to the mode of interaction - talking, watching, reading, visiting. It is important to reiterate that this measure was not intended to assess the extent to which men attended to sexual knowledge, took on this knowledge or believed it to be true or accurate. Rather the 22 items measured where and how often men accessed sexual knowledge across a variety of domains. A Cluster Analysis procedure was utilised to identify access patterns across the 22 sources, and men were categorised on the basis of these patterns (SexRepGrp); it was this categorisation that was used in subsequent analysis (this procedure is described in more detail later).

A second set of questions asked participants how regularly they engaged with a particular source specifically for knowledge about sexual difficulties or problems.
These questions used the same scale (never to daily). There were 14 sources included in this section, and they were also grouped according to mode of interaction. These sources were not used in the Cluster Analysis procedure; however, the median for each source was used for descriptive purposes and is reported in Table D.7 (located in Appendix D.5). The study partner, FPA Health, was particularly interested in the information gathered by these questions.

**Demographic measures**

The final page of the survey asked participants for detailed demographic information relating to: age, relationship status, highest level of education, employment status, occupation, sexual orientation, children, religiosity, country of birth, languages spoken at home, ethnicity and cultural background, and postcode. This information was collected to develop a picture of the sample; some of this information was used to ensure participants met inclusion criteria. This demographic information was not used to ascertain socioeconomic position or a formal description of cultural and ethnic background. In the subsequent analysis, age (Age) and relationship status (Rel) were both used as analysis variables.

**Procedure, recruitment and participants**

The recruitment strategies employed for this analysis are outlined in detail in Chapter 4; relevant issues around recruiting for sex research and recruiting through the internet are also discussed. Recruitment outcomes and a discussion about the demographic characteristics of the sample are also dealt with in Chapter 4. To summarise, the final analysis sample comprised of 457 surveys from heterosexual men, aged 18 and above, living in Australia at the time of completion. The men in this sample were aged between 18 and 77, with a mean age of 33 years; there were similar proportions of men identifying as single (45%) and in a married/de facto relationship (41%).

The method of recruitment was closely allied to the procedure and therefore determined survey completion; there were two methods available to participants:
hard copy or via the study website (see Chapter 4 for elaboration of the recruitment methods).

8.2. Results

Two separate analyses are reported here, each addresses the questions outlined in the introduction to this chapter. In the first, Pearson product-moment correlations are used to examine the relationship between men’s endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality (SAMSS) and men’s experience of their own sexuality (GMSex, GMRel, SexSat, DefCon, ProCon, AnxIns, SexAnx, FnProb, FnSat, and UWtSex). In the second analysis, a series of one-way ANOVAs are used to examine the relationship between men’s main sources of sexual knowledge (SexRepGrp) and their accounts of their own sexuality (GMSex, GMRel, SexSat, DefCon, ProCon, AnxIns, SexAnx, FnProb, FnSat, and UWtSex).

Pre-analysis data screening

Before analysis, data screening was conducted on the ten sexuality measures and the SAMSS, to identify potential outliers; this was done through the examination of Stem and Leaf plots. Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the scores of potential outliers were converted to z-scores, and those with a z-score > 3.29 were excluded or modified. After examination four cases were deleted from further analysis, the analysis sample therefore consisted of 453 men. A remaining 21 outliers were modified so they were one unit more extreme than the next most extreme score, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell. The scales showed some positive skewness, except for the three satisfaction scales (GMSex, GMRel, SexSat) which were, as expected, negatively skewed. Due to the large sample size, the results are considered robust.

During pre-analysis data screening, a potential problem with the Unwanted Sexual Activity scale (UWtSex) was identified. It became apparent that some men had indicated on a filter question that they had never taken part in unwanted sexual activity but their responses to the frequency of unwanted sexual activity questions
(which make up the scale UWtSex) indicated they had experienced unwanted sexual activity. Specifically, according to the filter question 29% of men had participated in unwanted sexual activity, but according to frequency questions (UWtSex) 41.5% of men had participated in unwanted sexual activity.

Upon closer examination of the response patterns, a number of possible explanations become apparent. Firstly, when answering the filter question, men who had participated in unwanted sexual activities may not have included as broad a range of sexual activities as was covered by the frequency questions. This may have resulted in underreporting on the filter question; this was supported by the findings that some men later indicating why they had taken part in these unwanted activities. Secondly, some men who indicated they had never taken part in unwanted activity indicated a very high frequency of participation in the subsequent frequency questions; these men may have misunderstood the frequency questions, believing them to be about desired sexual activity. That a number of these men later reported why they would not take part in unwanted sex, lends support to this explanation; this may have resulted in over reporting on the frequency questions. The problem was resolved by examining every case where there was a disparity between the response to the filter question and the responses to the frequency questions; a decision was then made to re-categorise each case as a yes or no. Correspondence between the filter and frequency questions and the open-ended questions was examined with a conservative approach taken in re-categorising cases. Following this procedure, the percentage of men recorded as having experienced unwanted sexual activity was 35%; this figure corresponds more closely with the incidence rates reported by previous research (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1994).

**Question 1: What is the relationship between endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality and sexuality**

Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted to produce a correlation matrix of the Stereotypes About Male Sexuality Scale (SAMSS) and the ten sexuality measures. Age was included to allow examination of the relationship between age and the different sexuality measures. The results are presented in Table 8.1.
Table 8.1. Correlation matrix between SAMSS, sexuality measures and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SAMSS</th>
<th>GMRel</th>
<th>GMSex</th>
<th>SexSat</th>
<th>AnxIns</th>
<th>ProCon</th>
<th>DefCon</th>
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Note. SAMSS - Stereotypes About Male Sexual Scale; GMRel - General Relationship Satisfaction; GMSex - Sexual Relationship Satisfaction; SexSat - Sexual Satisfaction; AnxIns - Anxious Insecurity; ProCon - Proactive Control; DefCon - Defensive Control; SexAnx - Sexual Anxiety; FnSat - Sexual Functioning Satisfaction; FnProb - Sexual Functioning Problems; UWtSex - Unwanted Sexual Activity

* p < .05, ** p < .01.

*Age was a continuous variable in this analysis

α = Cronbach’s index of internal consistency

The GMRel, GMSex, and SexSat scales were only completed by men who were in a relationship, hence the lower N

A secondary analysis was conducted to explore differences between single and married/de facto men; separate correlation matrices were produced for single and married men on the SAMSS and the ten sexuality measures. The results of the secondary analysis are in Table D.1 (located in Appendix D.2) and will be referred to when relevant.
Table 8.1 contains descriptive statistics for the ten sexuality measures, the SAMSS, and age. The mean overall score on the Stereotypes About Male Sexuality Scale (M = -9.75) suggests that men neither endorse nor reject this account of male sexuality; the scale range is -60 to +60. An examination of the mean scores for married/de facto men (M = -13.17) and single men (M = -5.91) suggests married/de facto men are more rejecting.

The men in this sample reported high levels of sexual satisfaction (GMSex M = 28.44, GMRel M = 29.39, SexSat M = 3.87), though it is worth noting that satisfaction was lower on the more physically oriented scale (SexSat). These findings are similar to those previously reported in studies with older American men in committed relationships (Lawrance & Byers, 1995), older married Chinese men (Renaud et al., 1997), and older married American men (M. Young et al., 1998). In the current analysis, only half the single men completed these three scales. These single men have been excluded by previous research (Lawrance & Byers, 1992, 1995; Renaud et al., 1997; M. Young et al., 1998), but it appears that their levels of sexual satisfaction are very similar to those reported by married/de facto men in this and previous studies.

The men in this sample reported occasionally using defensive (M = 8.34) and proactive (M = 7.04) behaviour, and experiencing sexual anxiety (M = 7.38) and anxious insecurity (M = 17.24) in sexual situations. Across these four scales, single men reported a higher incidence than married/de facto men did. Previous research suggests that both SexAnx and AnxIns are lower in men in committed relationships (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998).

Men reported occasionally experiencing sexual problems (M = 6.00); scale range was 0 to 24. Older men reported an increased incidence of sexual functioning problems ($r = .31, p < .01$); this confirms previous research (Chew et al., 2000;  

35 Scale ranges are GMSex 0 - 35; GMRel 0-35; SexSat 0-5
36 Scale ranges are DefCon 0-24; ProCon 0-16; AnxIns 0-60; SexAnx 0-16
Davidson et al., 1982; Feldman et al., 1994; Laumann et al., 1999; Marsiglio & Donnelly, 1991; Pinnock et al., 1999; Schiavi et al., 1990; Segraves & Segraves, 1992). Men reported being somewhat satisfied with their sexual functioning ($M = 5.71$); scale range was -10 to +10. It is worth noting that this did not decrease with age ($r = -.30$, ns) as might be expected given the increase in sexual problems; perhaps expectations of sexual functioning decrease in tandem with increasing age.

The very low mean score on unwanted sexual activity ($M = 2.93$), which was slightly higher in married men (married men $M = 3.28$; single men $M = 2.54$), indicates that levels of participation in this sample are very low; scale range was 0 to 28. That is, whilst 35% of the sample reported having participated in consensual but unwanted sexual activity at some time, the frequency of this was low.

**Correlations between sexuality measures and endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality**

The correlation matrix in Table 8.1 reports the correlations between the sexuality measures and men’s endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality. Men endorsing hegemonic male sexuality were significantly less satisfied with their sexual relationship ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$), general relationship ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) and were less sexually satisfied ($r = -.35$, $p < .01$). They also reported feeling more sexual anxiety ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and anxious insecurity ($r = .36$, $p < .01$) in sexual situations. Men also reported more proactive and orchestrating behaviour ($r = .17$, $p < .01$) in sexual situations, but an examination of the correlations for single and married/de facto men (Table D.1) revealed this was only significant for single men ($r = .18$, $p < .05$). There was no relationship between defensive limiting behaviour ($r = -.08$, ns) and endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality. However, an examination of the correlations for single and married men (Table D.1) revealed there was a significant negative relationship for married men ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$), such that married/de facto men reported less defensive behaviour the more endorsing they were of hegemonic male sexuality. Endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality was significantly associated with less satisfaction with sexual functioning ($r = -.14$, $p < .01$). An examination of the correlations for single and married men (Table D.1) revealed this was only significant for married men ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$). In contrast to
previously reported findings, endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality was not associated with an increase in sexual functioning problems \((r = .02, \text{ ns})\). Also against expectations, participation in unwanted sexual activity \((r = .04, \text{ ns})\) was not associated with endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality. Previous research has suggested that expectations of the male gender role, especially to seek more sexual opportunities and be more sexually experienced, may motivate men to participate in sex they do not desire (Muehlenhard, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O’Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). The analysis of open-ended question relating to motivations and consequences of participation in unwanted sexual activity are in Appendix D.4.

**Correlations between the sexuality measures**

The correlation matrix in Table 8.1 also reports intercorrelations between the ten sexuality measures. As expected the three sexual satisfaction scales (GMSex and GMRel \(r = .73, p < .01\); GMSex and SexSat \(r = .76, p < .01\); GMRel and SexSat \(r = .66, p < .01\)) were all highly positively correlated with each other (Byers et al., 1998; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; M. Young et al., 1998), supporting previous research claiming relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are strongly associated (Cupach & Metts, 1991; Farley & Davis, 1980; Gebhard, 1966; Hurlbert et al., 1993; Przybyla & Byrne, 1981). The similarity in the pattern of correlation for single and married men suggests that even for men in casual or relatively new relationships, their sexual satisfaction is not judged separately to the quality of the general relationship.

Anxious insecurity and sexual anxiety were significantly positively correlated \((r = .75, p < .01)\). Men who feel a lack of control and determination in sexual situations report also fearing punishment for violation of sexual norms; this echoes the findings reported by Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998). Proactive control was positively correlated with both anxious insecurity \((r = .20, p < .01)\), and sexual anxiety \((r = .13, p < .01)\). An examination of the correlations for single and married men revealed this was only significant in the single men (Table D.1). This suggests that men who are feeling a lack of control and determination in sexual situations and fear around violating sexual norms appear to be behaving in a more controlling and orchestrating manner.
Similar, but not significant, relationships have been previously reported (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998).

There were significant moderate correlations between the two anxiety scales - sexual anxiety and anxious insecurity - and most of the other sexuality measures. Men who reported experiencing significantly higher sexual anxiety and anxious insecurity in sexual situations, reported lower relationship satisfaction (SexAnx $r = -.34$, $p < .01$; AnxIns $r = -.40$, $p < .01$), sexual relationship satisfaction (SexAnx $r = -.35$, $p < .01$; AnxIns $r = -.52$, $p < .01$), sexual satisfaction (SexAnx $r = -.37$, $p < .01$; AnxIns $r = -.56$, $p < .01$), and sexual functioning satisfaction (SexAnx $r = -.41$, $p < .01$; AnxIns $r = -.42$, $p < .01$). That is, men experiencing more anxiety and insecurity in sexual situations are generally reporting lower satisfaction with all aspects of their sexual relationship. Men reporting more sexual functioning problems also reported higher sexual anxiety ($r = .24$, $p < .01$) and anxious insecurity ($r = .34$, $p < .01$); it has been previously suggested that anxiety around sex is implicated in the production and maintenance of sexual problems as well as being a likely outcome of sexual dysfunction (Fisher et al., 1988; Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999).

As would be expected, higher levels of sexual functioning problems were significantly associated with lower satisfaction with sexual functioning ($r = -.48$, $p < .01$). Men reporting higher satisfaction with sexual functioning reported higher general relationship satisfaction ($r = .35$, $p < .01$), sexual relationship satisfaction ($r = .42$, $p < .01$) and sexual satisfaction ($r = .41$, $p < .01$). The opposite associated was found with sexual functioning problems (GMRel $r = -.27$, $p < .01$; GMSex $r = -.19$, $p < .01$; SexSat $r = -.24$, $p < .01$), as problems increased satisfaction decreased.

Finally, there was a significant negative association between participating in unwanted sexual activity and sexual satisfaction ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$), and relationship satisfaction ($r = -.20$, $p < .01$), but not sexual relationship satisfaction ($r = -.10$, ns). An examination of the correlations for single and married men (Table D.1) revealed these were only significant for the single men (SexSat $r = -.28$, $p < .01$; GMRel $r = -.37$, $p < .01$; GMSex $r = -.21$, $p < .05$). This suggests that both the experience and motivation for participating in unwanted sexual activity may be different in committed relationships then in casual or new relationships. There was also a
positive association between unwanted sexual activity and sexual functioning problems \((r = .16, p < .01)\), which was significant in both married \((r = .15, p < .05)\) and single \((r = .16, p < .05)\) men.

**Question 2: What is the relationship between sources of sexual knowledge and sexuality**

This second analysis is concerned with exploring whether men’s experiences of their sexuality vary in relation to the sources of sexual knowledge they utilised over the past year. This was an exploratory analysis using patterns in men’s reported use of different sources of sexual knowledge, to look at differences in their experience of their sexuality. A more comprehensive and precise measure of exposure to, and engagement with, specific sexual representations would be required to build a model of the factors involved in men’s experience of their sexuality. It is doubtful that this kind of measure is viable in adult men in a contemporary western society where representations of sex and sexuality are ubiquitous.

Before analysis of the differences between men on sources of knowledge could be attempted a useful summary of the 22 potential sources had to be developed; this is addressed first.

*Creating a variable to group men based on knowledge source*

Cluster Analysis (CA) is a method for identifying patterns or similarities in a large amount of data where no pre-existing structure is known; it is an exploratory procedure used to classify cases. By identifying patterns, the data can be grouped into meaningful categories - meaningful because it is based on similarities. CA is often used to develop taxonomies in the natural sciences. It is used here to identify patterns in participant responses, and so is conducted on cases as opposed to items (as in factor analysis). CA is an appropriate procedure for this analysis, as we do not know what these men have in common in terms of their use of different sources of knowledge. Arbitrary grouping could be imposed, such as, their most utilised resource (partner, doctor, websites), their most utilised mode of interaction (talking,
reading). However, because of the number of different sources (22), complex associations between them are likely to be lost.

A CA was conducted with the aim of identifying underlying structures in the men’s pattern of knowledge source use. The analysis was performed on the data from frequency questions on the 22 sources of knowledge. Following the procedures outlined by various authors (Field, 2000; Stockburger), a Hierarchal Cluster Procedure for frequency data, was employed with the furthest neighbour (complete linkage) method. The CA procedure is only conducted on complete cases; if one item out of 22 was coded as missing, that case was excluded from subsequent analysis. There were 64 cases excluded on the basis of missing data. Missing data was modified using median replacement along the lines of the mean replacement procedure recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). The exception to this was 20 men who had not answered the partner item (Q1c) because they did not have a partner. It would not have been appropriate to replace this particular missing data with the sample median - weekly - as these men clearly indicated that were single, they were recoded as never on the discussing sex with a partner item.

The CA output is in the form of a dendrogram, a figure showing at what point each case becomes similar enough to another case to be clustered. At the extreme left of the dendrogram, all the cases are different (unclustered) and at the extreme right all the cases form one cluster. Moving from left to right, the criteria for similarity is relaxed and the cases become more alike - they cluster. Identifying clusters is a highly subjective process with few established criteria (Eklund, 1994; Stockburger), it basically involves reviewing the dendrogram until potential clusters are identified. In this analysis, the criteria were distance - a cluster solution was based on identifying clusters at a similar distance, and utility - too many clusters defeats the purpose of the procedure, too few makes it meaningless. Moreover, once a potential cluster solution was identified an examination of the pattern of sources for each cluster was undertaken to see if the grouping was meaningful.

As suggested by Field (2000) no cluster limit was imposed on the first run of the analysis and the output (dendrogram) examined for obvious distinct clusters; generally distinct clusters emerge. In this first run, four cases did not cluster until the
last stage. These men’s pattern of knowledge sources appeared to be very dissimilar to the other cases; these were excluded from further analysis. Examination of the dendrogram suggested a nine-cluster limit was appropriate. When the procedure was run, there were five clusters with an N less than 50. This was undesirable, as assumptions of homogeneity and equal sample sizes would likely be violated in the subsequent ANOVA analyses. The solution to this problem was to utilise fewer clusters, so the dendrogram was re-examined and cluster analysis run again with a six-cluster limit. There were still four clusters with less than 50 men, meaning that the problem of small clusters identified above was not addressed. The dendrogram was re-examined. The analysis was run again with a three-cluster limit. Though two of the smaller clusters did merge with a larger cluster, the three clusters were still unequal in terms of sample size (N = 229, 177, 51).

Steps that were taken to address the issue of small cluster groups, such as imposing a more stringent cluster limit, did not result in the merging of the smallest clusters in any of the cluster solutions. The smallest cluster (n = 51) began as two clusters in the 9-cluster solution and remained as two clusters in the 6-cluster solution. The fact that these cases remained as a separate cluster suggested that the men in this cluster had a consistently different pattern of sources of knowledge to the other men in the sample. Thus, though unequal cluster sizes were undesirable they may have theoretical relevance, therefore the three-cluster solution was retained (SexRepGrp). A table of the median scores for each source of knowledge (SexRepGrp), broken down by cluster group, is reported in Table D.2 (located in Appendix D.3). A summary of the main differences between the three groups, and their demographic characteristics, is presented below. The descriptive labels for each group are based on their most significant characteristic; for the first group this was their high level of verbal communication, the second group had a high level of communication with their partners only, and the third group reported a very high level of internet use.

**Talkers**

The first and largest group, identified here as Talkers, consisted of 50% (n = 229) of the sample. The average age of these men was 32, with 70% aged below 36. They were slightly more likely to be single than married/de facto. They were primarily recruited through Sexpo (48%), followed by the media, and then other sources. They
had the lowest level of religiosity (10%), and the lowest rate of men who spoke a language other than English at home (5%). Their main source of knowledge was reportedly via their immediate social circle. These men reported communicating about sex and sexuality\textsuperscript{37} weekly with partner and male friends, and monthly with female friends. They were the highest users of traditional erotica - watching erotic videos that they owned and reading erotic magazines several times per year; which is consistent given half of this group were recruited through a sex and lifestyle exhibition (Sexpo). However, they were the lowest users of the internet for sexual content, suggesting a more traditional approach to erotic material. They were also the least likely to have accessed health or medical resources in the past year.

**Restrained Communicators**

The second group, identified here as Restrained Communicators, consisted of 39% (\(n = 177\)) of the sample. The average age of these men was 35. This was the oldest group with a quarter of the men aged over 46. They were slightly more likely to be married/de facto than single. They were recruited equally through the media, Sexpo and other sources. They had the highest rate of religiosity (24%), and were the most likely to have children living at home (34%). These men were more restrained in their communication, relying primarily on partner (weekly), and speaking to male and female friends only several times per year. These men used traditional erotica less than the Talkers did, except for rented erotic videos. Restrained Communicators were a little more likely, than the Talkers, to have accessed the internet for sexual content, via websites, though at most several times a year. They were also more likely to have accessed health or medical resources in the past year, through their doctor or health education material; given they were the oldest group this may have been prompted by an increase in sexual problems.

**Net Surfers**

The final and smallest group, identified here as Net Surfers, consisted of 11% (\(n = 51\)) of the sample. The average age of these men was 32; 90% were aged under 36. Two thirds of these men were single. They were primarily recruited through the media and the internet (60%) followed by Sexpo and the University of Western

\textsuperscript{37} We know little about the content of this communication. Talk about sex and sexuality may, for example, include sexual jokes and innuendo.
Sydney. This group had the highest rate of men who spoke a language other than English at home (20%). These men reported the lowest communication with partners or friends, at best only talking several times a year. A third reported not speaking to a partner or male or female friend about sex in the past year. Net Surfers reported a similar level of traditional erotic use to the Restrained Communicators, though they were more likely to watch erotic videos they owned. They also reported a similar level of use of health and medical resources. The main source of knowledge for Net Surfers was the internet. This small group of men reported accessing personal webcam sites and chat rooms several times a year, and websites weekly. A third accessed internet websites for sexual content daily.

Differences between sources of knowledge (SexRepGrp) and sexuality measures

A series of one-way ANOVAs were carried out with SexRepGrp to identify differences on the ten sexuality measures. Homogeneity of variance assumptions were met and there were no significant differences between SexRepGrp, and GMRel $F(2,292) = 1.146, p = .319, \eta^2 = .008$; GMSex $F(2,281) = 1.870, p = .156, \eta^2 = .013$; SexSat $F(2,289) = 2.154, p = .118, \eta^2 = .015$; ProCon $F(2,422) = 1.987, p = .138, \eta^2 = .009$; DefCon $F(2,412) = 1.294, p = .275, \eta^2 = .006$; FnSat $F(2,426) = 1.103, p = .333, \eta^2 = .005$; UWtSex $F(2,450) = 1.642, p = .195, \eta^2 = .007$. A one-way ANOVA was also performed between SexRepGrp and SAMSS with no significant difference found $F(2,417) = 1.905, p = .150, \eta^2 = .009$.

To deal with unequal sample sizes, Method I was employed, as recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001). This adjusts the weighted means for sample size such that larger sample sizes are given higher weighting than the smaller sample sizes but does not give priority to either main effect.
A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between SexRepGrp and AnxIns $F(2,405) = 8.073, p = .000, \eta^2 = .038$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed the Net Surfers reported significantly higher anxious insecurity compared to both the Talkers ($p = .000$), and the Restrained Communicators ($p = .010$) (Table 8.2).

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<td>Net Surfers</td>
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<td>22.38</td>
<td>11.42</td>
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A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between SexRepGrp and SexAnx $F(2,418) = 8.593, p = .000, \eta^2 = .039$. Post hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test for unequal variance revealed the Net Surfers reported significantly higher sexual anxiety compared to both the Talkers ($p = .006$) and the Restrained Communicators ($p = .003$) (Table 8.3).

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<td>Net Surfers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.18</td>
<td>6.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between SexRepGrp and FnProb $F(2,417) = 5.145, p = .006, \eta^2 = .024$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed the Net Surfers reported more sexual functioning problems (FnProb) compared to the Talkers ($p = .010$) (Table 8.4). Although the Net Surfers reported more sexual functioning problems compared to the Restrained Communicators, this was not significant (Table 8.4).
Table 8.4. Mean sexual functioning problems scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SexRepGrp</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talkers</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrained Communicators</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Surfers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences on sexual anxiety between the Net Surfers and the Restrained Communicators may be due to age; the correlation matrix reported in Table 8.1, reported sexual anxiety was significantly higher in younger men \( (r = -.18) \). However, we would not expect a significant difference between the Net Surfers and Talkers as both groups have the same mean age. Moreover, both groups also have similar proportions of single men; single men reported higher anxious insecurity and sexual anxiety. The age and relationship status differences between the three groups are at best a partial explanation for variations in anxious insecurity and sexual anxiety.

Of the three significant ANOVA results, higher sexual functioning problem in the Net Surfers is the most unexpected. The correlation matrix (Table 8.1) revealed age was significantly associated with sexual functioning problems \( (r = .31) \), which would suggest that the Net Surfers \( (M = 32 \text{ years}) \) would have a lower incidence of sexual functioning problems compared to the Restrained Communicators \( (M = 35 \text{ years}) \); they did not. Further, given the Talkers and Net Surfers had the same mean age, we would have expected them to have a similar incidence of sexual functioning problems; they did not. Moreover, the correlation matrix for married and single men (Table D.1) showed a higher incidence of functioning problems in married/de facto men \( (\text{married } M = 6.49, \text{ single } M = 5.34) \). The result reported here is inconsistent with this: the Net Surfers group had the lowest proportion of married/de facto men, and Restrained Communicators the highest. These three significant results are suggestive of a difference between the Net Surfers and the other two groups that cannot be explained by age or relationship status.
8.3. Discussion

The results presented here appear to support Bernie Zilbergeld’s (1999) claims that the fantasy model of sex, which promotes the hegemonic account of male sexuality investigated here, has “made men and women anxious, created problems and dissatisfactions, and made resolution of existing problems more difficult” (Zilbergeld, 1999, p. 34). Men who tend toward endorsement of the hegemonic account of male sexuality described in the fantasy model of sex, reported different and often more negative experiences of their sexuality than men who rejected this account. These men were more likely to report feeling uncertainty about sexual meanings and fear around violating sexual norms, a lack of control and confidence in sexual situations, and tended to behave in a more orchestrating and controlling way. These men also reported less general and sexual relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and more dissatisfaction with their sexual functioning. For most men sources of sexual knowledge were not associated with differences in their experience of their sexuality. However, a small group of men who reported the internet was their primary source of knowledge about sex and sexuality did report higher anxiety, insecurity and sexual problems. These results will be discussed in detail below.

This survey study is significant for three reasons. It is novel in providing a comprehensive description of the experience of sexuality in a single large diverse metropolitan sample of heterosexual Australian men. Secondly, it empirically investigated the relationship between men’s sexuality and contemporary cultural representations of male sexuality. Finally, it attempted to explore the role of current sources of sexual knowledge in men’s experiences of sexuality, something previously limited to research with young people and sources of sexual knowledge, or adults and the impact of exposure to pornography.
Endorsing hegemonic male sexuality and men’s sexuality

Sexual Satisfaction

The men in this sample reported that they were very sexually satisfied, although this was reduced when more specific physical aspects were examined. Men who reported endorsement of the hegemonic account of male sexuality reported less satisfaction with their general relationship, sexual relationship, and more specifically, the physical aspects of their sexual relationship. Within the hegemonic account of male sexuality, space for communication or negotiation is severely restricted; this is demonstrated by the finding that endorsement of this account was related to a decrease in defensive control. Defensive control describes communicating sexual limits, making it clear when sex is not desired and discussing concerns like contraception; this type of behaviour is traditionally associated with women (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998). This finding may explain why men who were accepting of the hegemonic account, reported lower overall satisfaction. Previous research on sexual satisfaction has shown that communication is a significant contributor to sexual satisfaction (Chesney et al., 1981; Ferroni & Taffee, 1997), particularly the disclosure of sexual likes and dislikes (LoPiccolo & LoPiccolo, 1978; MacNeil & Byers, 1997; Metts & Cupach, 1989; Purnine & Carey, 1997; Russell, 1990). For both single and married men, more defensive control was associated with higher sexual and relationship satisfaction. It does appear that in the context of this study, defensive control may be capturing more open communication behaviour, such as a willingness to discuss sexual desires and limits, and not the protective and restricting behaviour envisaged by Vanwesenbeeck et al. Though single men did report more defensive control compared to married men, it seems likely that more active negotiation of sexual limits would be required in casual dating or encounters with strangers, or when in the establishing stage of a relationship. Protecting and being explicit about limits, rather than risking, appears to be a sensible strategy in these situations, particularly in terms of contraception and safer sex. Men in long-term relationships may have established a shared understanding of these issues through negotiation of contraceptive use or desired sexual practices, and
rely on this, rather than on direct communication or behaviour; hence they reported less of this behaviour. That defensive control was lower in older married men supports this. It is interesting that sexual and relationship satisfaction was also lower in these older married men, though not significantly, suggesting that sexual communication remains important in long-term relationships.

The lower sexual and relationship satisfaction in men who tended toward endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality may also be related to other aspects of this account, such as the restrictions on expressing desire for intimacy other than sex, the inevitability of sex following any physical contact, or its performance orientation. If sex is the only acceptable source of intimacy for these men, and simultaneously a demonstration of their masculinity, the weight of expectation on sex is likely to be considerable and so satisfaction less likely. This may have contributed to their lower sexual and relationship satisfaction as increased sexual activity has been demonstrated to be associated with increased sexual satisfaction (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; M. Young et al., 1998).

**Sexual interaction and communication**

Proactive control was significantly related to endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality, but only in single men. These men reported using charm, flattery, or seduction to control sexual situations. This may reflect the sexual situations single men are in, such as casual dating or establishing new relationships, where the hegemonic account of male sexuality would expect them to initiate and orchestrate sex. The weakness of this relationship is a little unexpected, as the behaviour and communication described by this scale seems like a good articulation of the hegemonic account of male sexuality described by Zilbergeld (1978; 1999). However, it may be that active initiation and orchestration of sexual situations is central in most accounts of male sexuality; men are expected to take the active role in sexual situations. Indeed, there was little variation between married and single men on this scale, it did not vary across age, and was associated with very few of the other sexuality measures. It is perhaps significant that in married men experiencing sexual functioning problems, proactive control decreased, suggesting that men experiencing sexual problems actively initiate sexual activity less.
Men who tended toward endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality also reported experiencing more anxious insecurity in sexual situations; these men felt uncertainty about their desires, their body and their partner’s desires, and so a lack of control or determination. They also experienced higher levels of sexual anxiety - fear of punishment for violating perceived sociosexual norms. Both of these findings are unsurprising as hegemonic male sexuality is restrictive and demanding, the expectations and norms conveyed by this account are neither realistic nor achievable (Zilbergeld, 1978, 1999). With the emphasis so strongly on performance, and a list of tasks to check off - erection, intercourse, orgasm - it would be expected that men accepting the expectations of hegemonic male sexuality experience more anxiety and insecurity in sexual situations. The hegemonic account also positions men as responsible and in control which may leave these men feeling that they do not have as much determination as they feel is expected within this account. Further, the emotional restriction stipulated by this account is likely to close down communication opportunities with their partners. Without the space for discussion of their own or partner’s desires, it is unsurprising that these men feel they have little determination over the sexual situation. Moreover, the fear of violating sociosexual norms - sexual anxiety - further hinders communication. The double bind is clear, endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality, sexual anxiety, and insecurity are mutually reinforcing.

It is worth noting the weak but positive relationship between anxious insecurity and proactive control, which suggests that men reporting more orchestrating and controlling behaviour were also experiencing more feelings of a lack of control in sexual situations. Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1998) reported a similar finding; she suggested that in line with hegemonic expectations, men are orchestrating sexual situations regardless of their feelings of anxious insecurity. An alternative interpretation is that they are initiating and orchestrating in response to feelings of a lack of control; the behaviour described by proactive control is one that allows little room for direct communication or negotiation. This is evocative of the male sex drive discourse described in Chapter 3. Indeed the behaviours described by this scale are part of the active role traditionally available to men, a role that sees men determining the sexual situation. On the other hand, these men may be taking on the
prevailing script of active male sexuality and consequently experience a lack of control and confidence because the outcomes are not what they expected or are less satisfying than anticipated; that is, it is not possible to fulfil the expectations of the sexual script articulated within hegemonic male sexuality.

It is of course possible that men experiencing dissatisfaction, anxiety and insecurity turn to this account of male sexuality because it is so pervasive and reassuringly certain: this is how you behave, this is what is expected of you, this is what you want. For example, whilst the myth ‘all touching leads to sex’ is on the one hand a denial of men’s desire for non-sexual physical intimacy, it can also be seen as a ‘helpful’ guideline. This is the constructed certitude (Stevenson et al., 2000) provided by the representations of hegemonic male sexuality analysed in Chapter 5, where the many how-to articles appeared to promise the rules that guarantee success, satisfaction and so an alleviation of anxiety.

**Sexual Functioning**

The majority of men reported experiencing sexual problems occasionally. Endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality was not related to an increasing incidence of sexual functioning problems in this sample; this contradicts previous research. However, previous research has been conducted with clinical samples, that is, men with a clinical diagnosis of sexual dysfunction (Adams et al., 1996; Baker & de Silva, 1988). Baker and de Silva (1988) reported that the sexually dysfunctional men in their study had a greater belief in the myths described by Zilbergeld (1978; 1999), when compared to a control group of sexually functional men. They suggested that the unrealistic expectations contained in these myths might be implicated in the production and maintenance of sexual problems, an argument originally put forward by Zilbergeld. It is possible that in the current study, the broad range of concerns and problems included in the scale measuring sexual problems diluted the finding reported by Baker and de Silva (1988). The use of an established measure, such as the International Index of Erectile Function (R. C. Rosen et al., 1997), may have replicated previous findings. However, the sample in the Baker and de Silva’s study was sexually dysfunctional men; the men in the current study reported experiencing sexual problems only occasionally.
It seems plausible that dissatisfaction is more relevant to this non-clinical sample than dysfunction or problems per se. Overall men reported being somewhat satisfied with their sexual functioning; married men who accepted the hegemonic account of male sexuality reported more dissatisfaction with their sexual functioning. Within the hegemonic account of male sexuality, sex is construed as intercourse, orgasm as driven and task oriented, and more importantly, an erection is essential. Further, this model sees sex as something that just happens: men should be able to perform on demand. If men expect sex to be unproblematic and instinctive, they may be less likely to talk about sexual desires and concerns with their partner. It seems likely that the dissatisfactions reported by the men in this study, may be connected to the unrealistic expectations articulated in the fantasy model of sex described by Zilbergeld. The relationship between sexual functioning satisfaction and endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality was not significant in single men. This may be due to the increased salience of these issues for married men, who have a regular partner so are more regularly confronted with these sexual functioning issues.

_Unwanted sexual activity_

Men reported irregularly participating in unwanted sexual activity; a third of the sample had participated in at least one unwanted sexual activity ranging from touching and kissing to vaginal and anal intercourse. There was no relationship between unwanted sexual activity and endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality in either single or married men. This is unexpected as there is general agreement in the literature that it is because men are under significant cultural pressure to pursue sexual opportunities, that they are likely to engage in unwanted sex (Muehlenhard, 1988; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1994). Some researchers have reported that pressure to conform to the male sex stereotype is the most common reason cited by men who have experienced consensual but unwanted sexual activities (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). Further, the literature on coercive sex suggests that men’s more neutral responses to coercive sexual activity when compared to women, is because men view these experiences as sexual opportunities and so are fulfilling cultural expectations (Chapter 2). It would be reasonable to expect that men who endorse the hegemonic model of male
sexuality would report more participation in sex that they did not desire. However, there are significant methodological issues with this, as these men may not frame this undesired sex as unwanted; that is, if all sexual opportunities are an opportunity to fulfil gender expectations then no sex is ‘unwanted’ though men may experience no concomitant desire\textsuperscript{39}. This raises important theoretical issues around sexual desire and the complex reasons why men participate in sexual activities. Recently published research, on experiences of first sexual intercourse, suggests that ambivalence may be an important feature in understanding why an individual consents to undesired sexual activity; there are multiple dimensions to an individual’s responses to a sexual initiation (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2005). How relevant these initial findings are beyond first sexual experiences is unclear.

Research looking at consensual but unwanted sex has also been unable to demonstrate a relationship with hegemonic masculinity. O’Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) examined participation in unwanted sexual activity in relation to hypermasculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984) and found no relationship. They suggested that this was due to the measure used: to endorse hypermasculinity men had to take quite an extreme stance. This is unsurprising as Mosher and Anderson (1986) describe hypermasculinity as an exaggeration of the male gender role. One explanation for the lack of a result in the current study is that the cultural expectation that men seek opportunities for sex is so deeply embedded in contemporary western culture that it is common across most accounts of male sexuality. The analysis of representations in Chapter 5, demonstrated how central a truth men’s constant desire for sex was in men’s magazines.

It is possible that sexual opportunity and fulfilling expectations of hegemonic male sexuality are not the most relevant motivations in men’s participation in unwanted sexual activity. Drawing on the analysis of open-ended responses to questions about motivations for and consequences of participation in unwanted sexual activity (discussed in Appendix D.4), some alternative explanations can be put forward. Only 19\% of men in this study who reported taking part in unwanted sexual activity, cited reasons that could be categorised as related to cultural expectations of male sexuality.

\textsuperscript{39} I am grateful to Dr Janette Perz for pointing out this distinction.
Moreover, the most commonly reported unwanted activities were hugging, kissing and touching, practices which are not privileged in the hegemonic account of male sexuality, unlike intercourse which may be associated with hegemonic male sexuality (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). However, practices like kissing and hugging do fit in with the previously discussed discourse of sexual skill, where a number of practices are enacted by men for women (see Chapters 3, 5 and 6). An examination of the reasons for participation, given by men in the current study suggests that relationship issues are central to explanations of why men consent to unwanted sexual activity. The most common reason cited was a desire to satisfy their partner or avoid hurting their feelings (51%). This lends support to the argument that participation in unwanted sexual activity may be understandable with a discourse of sexual skill - this discourse is not articulated well by the scale used here to measure endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality.

The positive outcomes to unwanted sexual activity cited by men reinforce this second explanation. The most common positive outcome cited by the men in this study, was that their partner was satisfied (26%); added to this were other positive outcomes for partner or relationship such as increased intimacy and closeness with their partner or enhanced communication. The meaning of sex in heterosexual relationships is clearly very relevant here. Sex may symbolise the status of the relationship as more than mere friendship (Gavey et al., 1999; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). Research suggests that for men, sex is also an important indicator of health of the relationship (Sprecher, 2002). Further, refusing a sexual advance may be construed as indicating a partner is not sexually desirable or desired, which would impact negatively on the whole relationship.

If accepting the hegemonic account motivates, and seeing unwanted sexual activity as a sexual opportunity mediates, responses, then we would expect few negative responses. Although 40% of men did report no negative outcomes, the most common outcome (28%) was negative feelings toward self. Men reported disappointment, guilt and shame at not being able to assert own feelings and desires, with many left feeling abused, denigrated and violated. It should be reiterated that these responses were to sexual activity that men had consented to. It is noteworthy that where motivations and positive outcomes tended to be associated with partner or the
relationship, the vast majority of negative consequence were for the men themselves. In terms of negative consequences, there were also differences for married and single men. For single men who reported participating in unwanted sexual activity, there was an associated decrease in sexual and relationship satisfaction (Table D.1, Appendix D.2); this was not found in the married men. It does appear that single men’s participation in unwanted sexual activity had a stronger negative bearing on relationship and sexual satisfaction than it did for married men. It may be that unwanted sexual activity is motivated by partner concerns in married men, thus the meaning they attribute to it is different.

The data report here, on unwanted sexual activity, is limited in a number of ways. Open-ended questions on a survey may not be the most appropriate to explore this issues. This method does not allow for an exploration of the consequences and outcomes of unwanted sexual activity. For example, although the analysis found that participation in unwanted sexual activity was significantly related to increased sexual functioning problems, very few men reported this issue in open format questions. A further issue is that the measure used collapsed all experiences of unwanted sexual activity into a single score. This is clearly problematic where there are complex motivations for participation. A more detailed analysis is required to explore patterns in the motivations and consequences of participation, and additional analysis should explore how participation relates to other relationship factors. This area warrants further investigation, and given the complexity apparent in the quantitative analysis reported here, qualitative methods may be more appropriate.

*Measurement issues - endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality*

A potential difficulty with using quantitative methods for an examination of men’s endorsement or acceptance of distinct accounts of male sexuality, is that an appropriate measure must be designed. In the case of the hegemonic account of male sexuality discussed in this analysis, the pre-existing measures available were limited, most focused on masculinity rather than sexuality, with only one measure being appropriate for this study. The disadvantage of giving men statements on sexuality/sex myths/sexual stereotypes to respond to is that they can quickly become out of date, or can be jarring in a different cultural situation to the one they were
designed for. For example, the measure used here was updated and some Americanisms changed for an Australian audience. Moreover, while they need to be explicit to avoid misunderstanding, their bluntness can make them seem extreme (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1998), and unrealistic.

The scale used in the current study, to measure endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality (SAMSS) was developed at least 20 years ago. It may be that the male sexuality described by the SAMSS does not adequately reflect the contemporary version of hegemonic male sexuality; the hegemonic account is not necessarily the traditional account, nor is it static (for theoretical discussions on the changing content of hegemonic masculinity see Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987; Donaldson, 1993). In particular, the complete denial of men’s emotional needs and restrictions on the expression of emotion were not reflected in the hegemonic representations described in the analysis of men’s magazines (Chapter 5). Nor did the SAMSS include the ability to perform a ‘sensitive’ male sexuality, whilst maintaining the integrity of the ‘real’ driven sexuality that may contradict this; the Casanova article discussed in Chapter 5, is an excellent example of this. More significantly, this scale did not encompass the discourse of sexual skill that was suggested in Chapter 3 and documented in Chapter 5. Contemporary hegemonic male sexuality may be more subtle than that reflected by the SAMSS. In future research, it may be more appropriate to develop a local and contemporary scale to ensure that the account of male sexuality hegemonic in a specific cultural milieu is represented by the measure used.

The analysis of the relationship between specific accounts of male sexuality and men’s experience of their sexuality reported here was limited to one account: hegemonic heterosexual male sexuality. An obvious next step would be to examine a range of culturally relevant accounts of male sexuality, particularly less dominant and recently emerging ones; for example, recent work on popular culture suggests ‘new man’, ‘new lad’ (Gill, 2003), and ‘new bloke’ (McKay, 2004). These alternative accounts could be identified through analysis of cultural representations, such as that in Chapter 5, or through qualitative interviewing with men. This is especially important given critical work within men’s studies, and sociology more generally, demonstrating the importance of not only a variety of accounts of men’s...
sexuality - masculinities and sexualities - but also men’s multiple and dynamic relationships to these accounts (for a discussion of this work see Whitehead, 2002).

Summary

The aim of the first analysis question was to ascertain whether endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality was associated with different experiences of sexuality. The findings reported above demonstrated that there was a relationship between a specific representation - hegemonic male sexuality - and men’s sexuality, with higher endorsement being related to more negative experiences across most aspects of sexuality. Most of the results discussed are in line with previous research or theoretical predictions. The absence of a relationship between participation in unwanted sexual activity and hegemonic male sexuality was unexpected, and was discussed in light of a supplementary analysis.

High internet use, low social sexual communication and men’s sexuality

For most of men in this study, there was no association between their main sources of sexual knowledge over the past year and their reported experience of their sexuality. The two main groups identified by the cluster analysis, the Talkers and Restrained Communicators, were quite similar across all the sexuality measures. The men in both of these groups talked often to their partners, with the Talkers also reporting consistent communication around sex and sexuality within their social circle. The slightly different communication pattern and the minor variations across the other sources, for example erotica, did not appear to be related to a significantly different experience of sexuality across these two groups. It may be that the solution to the problem of small clusters, which resulted in 90% of the sample being represented by two groups, removed differences in knowledge sources that are associated with the experience of sexuality. To this extent, the third knowledge group, Net Surfers, could be seen as outliers whose heavy internet use skewed the cluster analysis such that subtleties in the reliance on other sources were lost.
Nevertheless, for the men in this small group, their source of sexual knowledge was significantly related to their reported experience of their sexuality.

The Net Surfers reported the highest anxious insecurity, feeling apprehensive or uncertain about their desires, their body and their partner’s desires. These are men reporting a lack of control over sexual situations. They also reported the highest sexual anxiety, fearing punishment for violation of sociosexual norms related to their uncertainty about sexual meanings. Finally, they reported experiencing higher levels of sexual functioning problems, though this was only significantly different to the Talkers. As noted earlier, this last finding stands out as the most unexpected. On the basis of findings reported in this study and previous research, this group of young men would be expected to report the lowest level of sexual problems.

There is an expanding body of literature examining the problems associated with the use of the internet for sexual reasons, with considerable discussion around the notion of internet addition (M. Griffiths, 1999, 2000; K. Young, 1999) and cyber sex addiction (A. Cooper, 1998; A. Cooper, Scherer, Boies, & Gordon, 1999; S. E. Cooper, Delmonico, & Burg, 2000; Schneider, 2000; Schwartz & Southern, 2000). A number of studies have found that a small proportion of people engaging in online sexual activities experience negative effects (A. Cooper et al., 1999; S. E. Cooper, Griffin-Shelley, Delmonico, & Mathy, 2001; K. Young, 1998). Research has demonstrated a relationship between the amount of time people spend on the internet and negative consequences (A. Cooper et al., 1999; M. Griffiths, 2001; K. Young & Rogers, 1998). In Cooper et al.’s (1999) study, which was overwhelmingly based on heterosexual men, 8% of the sample was classified as heavy users, using the internet for sexual reasons more than 11 hours per week. When compared to individuals who reported lower internet usage, the heavy users were significantly less likely to be in relationships, and were more likely to use a broader range of internet sources, such as chat rooms and news groups. Moreover, the heavy users reported more psychological distress associated with their behaviour and many felt their internet use interfered with their lives. The characteristics of the heavy users group in Cooper et al.’s study appear very similar to the Net Surfer group identified here. It may be then, that the higher sexual anxiety, insecurity and sexual problems reported by the men identified as Net Surfers in this study, are associated with their high internet use.
The Net Surfers demonstrated a preference for websites over chat rooms; this supports previous research which has shown that when accessing material online, men prefer visual stimuli to interaction and the development of relationships (A. Cooper et al., 1999; S. E. Cooper et al., 2000). However, this does put them at variance with the profile of heavy internet users described by previous research. In the Cooper et al. (1999) study the heavy users were more likely to be using chat rooms. Chat rooms are the ultimate in ‘responsibility-free’ sex as men can simply ‘log off’ when they desire; for men who are seeking sexual encounters outside of their relationship chat rooms may seem safer than offline encounters. Further, in virtual sex men can avoid performance anxiety, this is particularly true if they are already experiencing sexual problems (M. Griffiths, 2001; K. Young, Griffin-Shelley, Cooper, & O'Mara, 2000). However, the Net Surfers in the current study reported using chat rooms several times per year compared to their weekly to daily website use, which suggests that cyber/interactive sex is not their primary motivation. Their use of the internet appears to be a means of accessing sexually explicit material for entertainment or sexual arousal, and not for other reasons such as meeting a sexual or romantic partner (A. Cooper & Griffin-Shelley, 2002). A Canadian study found that 83% of men who had viewed sexual material online, had masturbated while doing so (Boies, 2002). In the current study, the material the men in the Net Surfers group accessed was not known, nor what activities they engaged in while viewing it.

Unfortunately, there is a considerable absence of research on the content of sexually explicit material on the internet, in particular on the representations of male sexuality in this material. For example, Boies (2002) reported the frequency of internet use for seeking sexual entertainment, but not what kind of material was viewed. Therefore, it is not possible to speculate whether the Net Surfers’ higher anxiety, insecurity and problems, are linked to a limited representation of phallic male sexuality that is the mainstay of sexually explicit material (see Chapters 3 and 5), or, associated with the peculiarities of internet technology. The internet has been described as unique in terms of the accessibility, affordability and the anonymity it offers (A. Cooper & Griffin-Shelley, 2002), which may encourage compulsive behaviour (M. Griffiths, 2001) potentially linked to problems such as those reported by the men here.
The lack of information about what material is being accessed, and why men are seeking it, makes interpretation of these findings difficult. However, for this small group of men there does appear to be a complex of anxiety, uncertainty and sexual problems, which they are experiencing in the context of high internet use and low social and sexual communication. How the internet is implicated in the production or maintenance of these negative experiences needs to be explored by future research. It would also be useful to know the kind of material these men are engaging with and how they are using it, and whether men experiencing sexual difficulties turn to the internet seeking information or less problematic sexual encounters. For the 40% of these Net Surfers who were married/de facto, how is their internet use and low communication with their partner affecting their relationships? It is also worth highlighting that a fifth of these men spoke a language other than English at home; whether this is significant or not requires additional research.

The interpretation of the Net Surfers’ elevated anxiety and insecurity is hampered by their reported irregular communication with partners and friends. Their relatively low chat room use suggests that this is not offset by increased offline communication. It may be that these men have withdrawn from their immediate social circle because of sexual problems and anxieties. Research suggests that individuals who experience negative effects of internet use are nearly four times more likely to have had an existing sexual problem (S. E. Cooper et al., 2001). A final but important point to make here, is that there may be something about the way these men are negotiating representations of male sexuality which is different to other men. Perhaps there is something protective in the regular communication with their partner or social circle reported by the Talkers and Restrained Communicators; this may be an area for further research.

**Measurement issues - sources of sexual knowledge**

This exploratory analysis involved designing a measure to identify where men sought sexual knowledge and the frequency of this over the previous year. The measure attempted to address problems common in similar research with young people. Most notably the measure did not ask for the most common or most important source of
sexual knowledge; a frequent criticism of research on sexual knowledge (Andre et al., 1989). Rather than condensing the range of sources into a single primary source, which is in danger of oversimplifying a complex and diverse situation, the measure attempted to identify patterns in sources of sexual knowledge.

It is important however, to recognise the scope of this measure. Firstly, it is not designed to give exact information on men’s exposure to knowledge over the preceding year; this is primarily due to it being a retrospective self-report measure. Unlike much media effects research, no claims are being made about a unidirectional relationship between the increased frequency of exposure and the effect of representations in sexual knowledge. Indeed, as a correlational study this is not possible. Secondly, it does not give any idea of men’s level of engagement with sexual representations, nor how they framed them. How men respond to representations is vital: do they see them as accurate, realistic, useful, informative, entertaining, or arousing. Thirdly, the context and motivations of men’s exposure are not part of this measure; for example, are men looking at erotic videos on their own or with a partner, for sexual entertainment, arousal, guidance, reassurance, etc. Finally, and most importantly, this measure tells us nothing about the content of the sexual knowledge. This is the most significant criticism levelled at the media effects research reviewed in Chapter 2, where meanings and content was rarely examined. Thus, the findings of the analysis reported here need to be interpreted in light of these issues.

Although the measure was designed to allow for complex patterns in men’s exposure to the 22 sources of sexual knowledge, the Cluster Analysis procedure may have paradoxically undermined this. The identification of meaningful groupings that were also appropriate for statistical analysis (not small or unequal sample sizes) may have masked or reduced different patterns of exposure. As noted above, the differences between the two largest groups, Talkers and Restrained Communicators, were minor, and were not associated with significant differences in the experience of sexuality. However, the CA procedure did uncover a small group of men, Net Surfers, whose heavy internet use did appear to be related to a different experience of sexuality when compared with the other men in the sample.
Summary

The second analysis question was concerned with the main sources of sexual knowledge in a sample of Australian men, and whether there was a relationship between these sources and men’s accounts of their sexuality. The findings reported above suggest that for most men there were only limited differences in their main sources of sexual knowledge, with social interaction being the chief source for the vast majority. There appeared to be no differences between these men in their experience of their sexuality. However, the analysis process may have generalised the knowledge sources to the extent that only major differences remained, in doing so reducing variation in the experience of sexuality. This analysis did identify a small group of men who had a markedly different pattern of knowledge source use. They relied heavily on the internet and reported low social sexual communication. These men reported higher sexual anxiety, anxious insecurity and sexual problems. A number of possible explanations were proposed. It was noted that limited information on the kind of material men were exposed to, and so the representations contained in it, make interpretations preliminary.

Methodological limitations

In addition to the specific limitations relating to the individual analyses and to the SAMSS and SexRep/SexRepGrp measures discussed above, there are the broader limitations inherent in using quantitative methods to explore the issues addressed in this analysis.

The first concerns a general limitation around using quantitative methods to examine men’s experience of their sexuality. The measures employed here are useful in providing a general snap shot of male sexuality in a diverse population of men, and allowing a complex analysis of the different but predetermined variables that may be relevant to men’s experiences. However, reducing men’s experiences to a single variable, answer, or to a few scales may remove the very subtleties and complexities that are relevant to differences in men’s experiences. A related issue is the focus on statistically significant results in quantitative research, which can result in potentially
The argument at the centre of this thesis is that men give meaning to their sexuality and sexual experiences by drawing on culturally available representations of male sexuality. These representations also make available specific practices and ways of behaving and interacting. The hegemonic account of male sexuality appears to be associated with dissatisfaction across various aspects of men’s sexuality, and with more anxiety and insecurity. Across most sources of knowledge that men in this study reported using, the account of their sexuality did not differ. Men who often use the internet for its sexual content, and who have very irregular communication with partner and friends, reported a higher incidence of sexual problems, and increased anxiety and insecurity in sexual situations. Whether this is associated with the sexual knowledge they are exposed to, how they negotiate representations, or perhaps their lack of social communication, requires further research. The quantitative analysis of survey data presented in this chapter addressed the final research question: what are the consequences for men of these different ways of understanding sex and sexuality?
This quantitative analysis reinforces the findings reported in the qualitative analyses undertaken in previous chapters. In particular, the complex relationship between the physical aspects, emotions, behaviours, expectations and satisfactions that make up men’s experience of their sexuality, and how representations of male sexuality may be implicated in this relationship. The closing chapter of this thesis will attempt to integrate these findings and consider the implications of this research.
CHAPTER 9. Conclusion: Reflecting on Male Sexuality And Representations

How do you conclude a qualitative study? You don’t…we need to recognise our penchant for closure of some sort, especially for endings that are satisfying…it is not necessary to push a canoe into the sunset at the end of every paper (Wolcott, 1990, p 56).

The goal of this research study was to explore the relationship between cultural representations of heterosexual male sexuality and men’s sexual subjectivity and sexual behaviour. To meet this objective, a critical realist framework was adopted and mixed methods employed. Individual and group interviews, cultural material and a large-scale survey were analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques. Over the course of this thesis, various accounts of heterosexual male sexuality were interrogated, both through the examination of representations, and through the exploration of men’s negotiation - enacting, resisting, accommodating, resolving - of these same representations in their production of accounts of their own sexuality. In each of the analysis chapters (5 to 8), I have undertaken discussion of the findings from each analysis, thus it is not necessary to reiterate this again in any detail. Rather, this concluding section will discuss the broad findings, reflect on the significance of the four analyses for understanding male sexual subjectivity, and consider some of the implications for education and clinical work.
The research questions that drove this research study were:

- What are the different ways heterosexual male sexuality is represented in the accounts of individual men and in popular culture?
- How are these ways of understanding heterosexual male sexuality taken up and resisted by individual men to give meaning to their experience of themselves, their bodies, their desires and their relations with women?
- What are the consequences for men of these different ways of understanding sex and sexuality?

In relation to the first research question, the analysis undertaken in this thesis demonstrated that there is a multiplicity of representations around heterosexual male sexuality. These representations did not produce a single consistent account of heterosexual male sexuality, but constituted many, often contradictory, accounts. These representations drew on, or articulated, a number of discourses around heterosexual male sexuality. Three discourses not identified in previous research were described: a discourse of male sexual skill, a discourse of compromise in relationships and a discourse of salvation. Together with previously documented discourses, such as the male sex drive, have/hold, permissive and reciprocal discourses, these constitute the conditions of possibility for heterosexual male sexuality. That is, the discursive complex within which an individual man’s account of heterosexual male sexuality is intelligible and so recognisable. The analyses presented in Chapter 5 and 6, further demonstrated that there is a particular array of representations that constituted a hegemonic account of male sexuality in cultural material and in the accounts of urban Australian men - those which are repeatedly and consistently positioned across cultural material and men’s accounts, as the indisputable, self-evident, taken for granted truth about heterosexual male sexuality. These truths are that men want sex/more sex, that sex is a physical experience for men, that men’s sexuality is different to women’s, and that men must control their sexual drive and sexual body.

In relation to the second research question, this analysis demonstrated that heterosexual men’s experiences of sex and their sexuality, or their accounts of these experiences, do not constitute a simple, unitary account. Moreover, that in
understanding their experiences, men must negotiate the multiplicity of meanings of heterosexual male sexuality, each with differing consequences for men (as well as for women, and society). It was also demonstrated that men’s negotiation of the hegemonic account, the focus of Chapters 7 and 8, was a complex, difficult process. To be a heterosexual man, within this hegemonic account, requires considerable identity work, mastering and enacting the appropriate practices and meanings, and suppressing or reframing others. Further, it was demonstrated that there is considerable variation in men’s negotiation of representations; for example, the negotiation of single men and men in relationships varied.

In relation to the final research question, it was reported that men’s positioning within the hegemonic account of male sexuality is not without negative consequences. In the second interview analysis, the struggles and dilemmas produced in their negotiation of the hegemonic account were explored, with denying or suppressing threatening meanings and desires the most significant negative aspect of men positioning themselves within the hegemonic account. Due to men’s precarious hold on subject positions within the hegemonic account, and the constant threat of slipping up, they had to undertake constant surveillance of self and others, and regulate the meaning of sexual practices. The negative consequences for men who attempted to resist the hegemonic account were also demonstrated, the most notable being positioned outside the hegemonic account, and so being unrecognisable as heterosexual man. In the survey analysis it was demonstrated that men who endorsed the hegemonic account of male sexuality reported higher sexual anxiety and insecurity, and lower satisfaction with sex, and with their sexual and general relationships.

9.1. Implications of the study

The findings of this study have important implications for the way heterosexual male sexuality and heterosexual relationships are understood, and consequently for sex education, sexual health policy and practice, and for clinical work with individuals or couples.
**Implications - the hegemonic account of male sexuality**

As anticipated, representations of a driven male sexuality, and man’s unquestioned desire for sex, were ubiquitous in this study. Across interviews and the analysis of cultural material, this constituted a kind of bottom line about male sexuality; it is clear that the male sexual drive discourse still prevails in Australia today. In addition, it is interesting that other discourses and representations repeatedly reinforced and accommodated this account of sexuality. Indeed, even those that problematised it - such as the salvation or male sexual skill discourses – acted to reinforce it. There remains a need to continually and consistently challenge this ‘fact’ about men and their sexuality, not only in work with young men but in education and counselling with young and older men, and with women.

This hegemonic account has considerable implications for men and broader consequences for their relationships with women. Within the hegemonic account, it is unintelligible that men do not want sex. Consequently, men not desiring sex - always, often, now - are potentially framed as dysfunctional and in need of intervention, usually pharmaceutical treatment; alternatively, men are positioned as desiring sex but women are positioned as a barrier. It was evident in the interview analysis that the lack of sex in relationships was usually attributed to women’s reticence, which allowed men to suppress the alternative explanation that it is men who are not desiring, an explanation which could result in relationship tension for a number of reasons. The framing of men’s sexuality as driven by physiological needs may also produce a sense of obligation in women, if it is women who are positioned as preventing men from having these essential needs met. The hegemonic truths of male sexuality are also relevant in the negotiation of disparate sexual desire in long-term relationships, and need to be considered by those undertaking relationship therapy with couples. The findings reported in the quantitative analysis chapter, that men who tend toward endorsing the hegemonic account report lower sexual satisfaction, sexual relationship satisfaction, and general relationship satisfaction, reinforces the relevance of this account for understanding relationships. Moreover, these findings emphasise the many negative consequences for men of this taken for granted account of male sexuality. However, it was clear that even when a partner
allowed access to sex (as it was framed by the men), this did not necessarily or inevitably result in satisfaction; nor did men who sought sexual relations outside their relationship necessarily give an account of their sexuality that could be termed ‘satisfied’, in spite of having their sexual needs met (within the framing of the hegemonic account). Indeed, men often articulated considerable ambivalence about these situations. The meaning of sex for men’s subjectivity is also central to understanding and developing healthy and positive heterosexual relationships. One issue raised in the interview analysis (Chapter 7) demonstrated this: if sex is a means for men to receive recognition as a heterosexual male subject, then the lack of sex is potentially devastating for men, and a source of tension for couples. Expanding the opportunities for recognition, by making available alternative positions in which an individual man can take up a position as heterosexual man in relation to woman - not only through seeking sex - may be relevant to sex or couples therapy.

In the analysis of interview data, single men’s regulation of the meaning of sexual encounters was explored; specifically, the practices that ensured an encounter was limited to just-sex and could produce no expectations of a future relationship or commitment, such that men were in no danger of being branded a ‘bastard’. It was argued that men’s articulation of certain meanings around sex and suppression of others was central to this process, with the consequences that opportunities for negotiation are closed down. For example, men related telling women what the boundaries of the relationship would be rather than discussing both partners’ desires and expectations; they also framed sex as an opportunity to have a physical sexual need met rather than as a shared or emotional experience. In casual encounters, such as those being described by the men in this analysis, the dangers of not communicating or negotiating are manifold; chiefly, the limiting of communication around consent, the desire for specific sexual practices, contraception and safer sex practices. Moreover, it is likely to be difficult for either partner to challenge the inevitability of intercourse within the dominant sexual script, if they do not desire this sexual practice, or desire other practices. By making visible the truths that frame these encounters in this way - for example that men want/need sex and women do not - it may be possible to disrupt practices that close down communication and negotiation, and allow men and women to negotiate mutually pleasurable, consensual and safe sexual encounters. Moreover, highlighting the discursive positions which
need to be challenged, a project begun in this thesis, can facilitate the development of sociosexual skills.

An associated point that flows from the interview analysis is that men’s sexual subjectivity was regulated not only by the men themselves but also by other men, and by those women that men were in relationships with. It is not simply a matter of men freely choosing one position or another; the taken for grantedness of the hegemonic account, and other men and women’s investments in this account, mediate men’s enactment or resistance of one position or another (Davies & Harré, 1990). Thus, exploring how others participate in the regulation of sexual meaning and practice is an important part of both sex education and couples therapy.

A central principle of the post-structuralist framework adopted in the qualitative analyses undertaken in this study, is that where there is a multiplicity of meaning there is the possibility of change (Hollway, 1984); (Davies, 1997; Gavey, 1989). That is, the ways in which men understand their sexuality, sex and relationships with women can be different to the accounts presented here, because there are competing accounts available. Whilst it is important to acknowledge the power of the hegemonic account, it is not inevitable; some men’s resistance to this account was discussed in the preceding analyses. Moreover, by its very nature, hegemony is not static - the content of the hegemonic account will change and vary across contexts; though clearly the notion of an always desiring male sexuality has been an enduring aspect of this account. As Potts (2002) has argued in her work on revealing the vocabularies of heterosexuality, it is only by making visible the taken for granted that we can begin to consider the possibilities for change. Thus, generating and documenting alternative accounts of heterosexual male sexuality will address some of the issues raised in this thesis. However, it is not only a matter of expanding the positions available to men through more positive accounts (for both men and women), but also of equipping men with strategies for resisting hegemonic accounts.
Implications - sex as commodity

A theme of compromise, exchange, and reciprocity in relationships, which framed sex as a commodity, ran throughout the analyses presented in this thesis. This theme drew on a number of discourses and hegemonic truths, such that an active, masterful and skillful man would receive access to sex (intercourse) when he enacted the appropriate practices with/for a woman (such as, seduction or providing an orgasm). A number of possible dangers in this account were discussed, specifically, the assumption of a shared (but often unspoken) system of exchange acted to create a sense of expectation in men. The implications of this for men included resentment when they did the appropriate ‘work’ and sex did not follow, and a sense of failure, fearing that they had not demonstrated sufficient mastery of the practices. Both of these possible outcomes threatened men’s positioning within the hegemonic account of male sexuality.

The implications of this kind of system for the negotiation of sexual relations are concerning, and they have repercussions for how we understand sexual coercion. What does a woman saying ‘no’, mean in this context? Is it simply an encouragement to men to work harder? This account precludes an active female desire, for it is men’s work that awakens women’s desire, and constitutes women’s sexual pleasure entirely in terms of an orgasm produced by man’s work. Again, this is likely to create a powerful sense of obligation in women, and provides an account to justify sexual coercion or violence - men are simply taking what they are entitled to, indeed have undertaken considerable work to secure. Moreover, because it is a tacit system, the dominant sexual script of increasing levels of intimacy, with intercourse as the goal and man’s orgasm the conclusion, becomes inevitable - unless there is communication, and as we have repeatedly seen, the hegemonic account of male sexuality closes down opportunities for communication. If intercourse is the only acceptable reward for men, then the acceptability of a woman saying ‘no’ and possibility of a man hearing her, is reduced, as is the space for negotiating other sexual practices. Again, making explicit the assumptions in this system, reiterating not only a woman’s right to say ‘no’, but also to an active sexuality, and undermining
intercourse as the taken for granted sexual practice in heterosexual sex, will address
some of these issues.

**Implications - sources of sexual knowledge**

It is clear that the context where men get knowledge about sex and sexuality is
important - in particular because of the multiple and competing accounts of male
sexuality available. The survey study revealed that for most men, their close social
networks were usually where they sought knowledge about sex and sexuality. A
small group of men who did not use these networks - and perhaps did not have these
kinds of networks - instead relied heavily on the internet. These men reported higher
sexual anxiety and anxious insecurity, and surprisingly, given their age, a higher
incidence of sexual problems. The sexual representations that these men are
engaging with may be implicated in this; a specific call for future research around
this issue is made below. This is an important issue for sex education with young
men, suggesting a need to establish spaces whereby men can discuss sexual issues,
and talk about the representations they engage with on the internet. At the very least,
the importance of the internet as a source of sexual information needs to be taken
seriously, as this study suggests there may be negative consequences for men
engaging with this source of sexual knowledge.

A more general point to raise about sources of sexual knowledge, is that when asked
where they sought information when experiencing a sexual problem, the most
common sources of sexual knowledge were partner and men’s magazines (see Table
D.7, Appendix D.5). Medical resources, doctors, and health education bodies such as
FPA Health, did not rate a mention - this is clearly a serious issue that needs to be
addressed. That men reported talking to their partner about the sexual difficulty is a
very positive finding. However, the findings relating to representations of sexual
problems in men’s magazines, and men’s reported reliance on this as a source of
sexual knowledge, are concerning. The examination of men’s magazines undertaken
in this thesis suggests that the representations of sexual problems in magazines is
very limited. The focus generally being on physical causes and physical treatments,
on intercourse and the functioning penis, and on the control of sexual desire and the
sexual body in order to provide sexual pleasure for women. Moreover, there was a common assumption that securing access to sex is the sum total of man’s sexual desire. Together these findings represent a significant concern for men’s sexual health. Certainly, it raises a question about why men do not turn to health education resources. It is possible that these are perceived by men as a last resort, for serious long-term problems, or that men are simply not aware of the resources available.

Methodological implications - the mixed method approach

It was suggested in Chapter 4 that there are numerous advantages to a mixed methods approach. These included broadening the scope of the research, capturing the complexity of the issues under study, addressing the needs of different audiences, reflecting contradictions and alternative perspectives, and finally reaching a more diverse sample of participants by offering a variety of ways to participant in the study. I believe the promise of mixed methods has been borne out in this thesis.

One of the most significant advantages of the mixed method approach adopted in this study is that evidence from a variety of sources could be gathered. It could be suggested that the men’s magazines provide a peculiar set of representations, but by utilising mixed methods it has been demonstrated that there is considerable overlap between these representations of heterosexual male sexuality and those evident in men’s accounts. It is worth reiterating that men’s accounts were produced across a variety of contexts - individual and group interviews, with men across a broad age range (18 to 77), in different relationship contexts and with diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. The accounts produced were also in response to different kinds of questions and interviews framing. For example, the narrative interviews were very different in focus to the last stage of semi-structured interviewing. Moreover, the representations presented here resonate with those discussed in previous research, notably discursive examinations of men and women’s accounts, and of cultural material, conducted in Australasia and beyond. There was also considerable overlap with some of these representations and the model of male sexuality evident in the medical and sexological research reviewed in Chapter 2. Thus, the evidence suggests that the representations and ways of understanding and giving meaning to male
sexuality are not only common across the men in this study, but also pervasive in contemporary Australian culture. The mixed method approach also allowed for different explorations of the relationship between representations and sexual subjectivity. The quantitative analysis demonstrated clearly that men who endorsed the hegemonic account reported more negative experiences of their sexuality. The qualitative analysis lends support to this finding. Moreover, qualitative methods were a powerful research tool for examining how men negotiate representations, revealing the complexities of the relationship identified by the quantitative analysis.

From a personal perspective, however, mixed method represented the most significant challenge in this study. The disadvantages to mixed methods, raised in Chapter 4, appeared deceptively minor: methodological complexity which required knowledge across a variety of methodologies and paradigms, and difficulties in drawing together and interpreting findings from different methodologies (ontologies and epistemologies). These two disadvantages conceal a number of struggles that bubbled along throughout the process of this study.

Striking a balance between the three studies was the most significant problem encountered with a mixed method approach. Each analysis undertaken reflects a different domain of relevant literature, with an appropriate methodology (and associated methods) and conventions, and often opposing epistemological standpoints. Maintaining a balance - the space given to each, the depth of analysis undertaken - was a constant source of frustration. This is not a gripe about not having enough time or space, or about having been overambitious in the research design. Rather, I am posing a question about the importance of considering the appropriateness of a mixed method design. Is it possible to do justice to each study - to develop an appropriate theoretical framework, to unravel and then synthesise the results? Are there inevitably concessions on theoretical sophistication, or the depth of analysis? Is what is lost in the depth of analysis made up for in breath of the study? That is, is it possible to undertake a mixed methods study without losing some of the very complexity, diversity and richness that was sought? A mixed method approach is not inherently any better than a single method approach. A Critical Realist framework would argue that the method that is most appropriate for addressing the
research question should be used. For the issue of interest in this thesis, mixed
methods were appropriate.

9.2. Future directions; building on the current research

The analysis described in this thesis was significant in that it attempted to examine
the relationship between cultural representations and men’s sexual subjectivity and
behaviour. The analysis focus was broadly on the sexual subjectivity of Australian
men, and not on sexual health, clinical issues or populations, or problems associated
with male sexuality. The analytic gaze was limited to the sexual subjectivity and
practices of men, to their negotiation of sexual representations, and to the
consequences of this negotiation for men. Finally, the analysis sought to examine
differences across men, usually in terms of age and relationship context, and not
differences between men and women. The boundaries of this research necessarily set
up exclusions, and it became clear during the analysis that some of these warranted
further examination.

The diversity of the sample of men who participated in this research has already been
noted, reflecting variations in age, relationship context and experience, ethnic and
cultural background, education level, etc. However, some groups of men appeared to
be under (and over) represented. The low proportion of men who spoke English as a
second language was perhaps unsurprising given all the study materials were in
English, and no specific recruitment was conducted around this issue. A more
unexpected characteristic of the study sample was how highly educated they appear
to be, with 20% of the survey sample and 10% of the interview sample, having a
postgraduate qualification. This may be due to sampling bias - the particular media
that ran stories on the survey and provided links to the study website, the emphasis
on online completion of surveys (anecdotally, a significant proportion of men who
responded to the media publicity and completed the survey online did so during work
hours, suggesting access to a computer at work). This over-representativeness does
need to be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Future research should
look at tailoring recruitment strategies to ensure that participation is available across
demographic characteristics.
Diane di Mauro’s (1995) call for sexuality research across the lifespan has been met by an increasingly rich body of research on young (often adolescent) men’s negotiation of discourses around both gender and sexuality (this work has been referred to a number of times in the thesis). There appears to be no concomitant focus on men’s sexual subjectivity in middle age and beyond. It was clear in this thesis that some issues were unique to men in long-term relationships - accounting for the lack of sex, for example. The specific experience of these men, especially in light of an often growing disparity in levels of sexual interest between partners, partner illness or death, deserves further examination. Moreover, there were no older single men in the interview section of this study - what are these men’s experiences of sexuality and how do they negotiate sexual representations? Much of the research on older men’s sexuality focuses on issues around the aging body and sexual dysfunction, often in the context of the efficacy of sexual pharmaceuticals like Viagra. This needs to be balanced by explorations of men’s subjective experience of sexuality, especially in the context of a long-term relationship, which do not inevitably focus on sexual problems.

Apart from age and relationship context, the significance of other contexts, for men’s experience of sex and negotiation of representations was not examined. Chief among these is ethnic and cultural background. In the interview study, in particular, a considerable proportion of men identified as ethnically Asian or Asian-Australian. The majority of these men were in two focus groups, and all were young and single. Of the 16 individual interviews conducted, three were with men who identified as Asian or Asian-Australian. Issues around sexuality and ethnicity were raised in these individual interviews, but not in the focus groups. This talk tended to focus on the incompatibility between expectations of men arising from Western/Australian discourses, which tended to reflect the hegemonic account described here, and those arising from their family and ethnic background. There was, however, little talk of ethnicity and sexuality in the two focus groups which comprised men identifying as Asian or Asian-Australian men. It is possible to speculate that the taken-for-grantedness of a shared experience in these groups may have mediated this discussion; this is reinforced by the fact that the men tended to know each other and the facilitators were of a similar ethnic background. Nonetheless, in terms of the
account of hegemonic masculinity explored in the analysis presented in Chapter 6, there appeared to be little difference between the focus group with young mainly white Australian men and those two groups with young mainly Asian or Asian-Australian men. As ethnicity was not a focus of the analysis in Chapter 7, we do not know how relevant it may be to men’s negotiation of these hegemonic truths, nor how this may differ for men of different ages or in different relationship contexts. The absence of older and married men identifying as Asian and Asian-Australian in this sample represents a limitation of this research, and is worthy of future attention.

The most obvious absence in this research was women’s voices, although they often broke in from the margins through the voices of friends and colleagues. There were many occasions when I felt women should have been at the heart of the analysis. On the one hand, it would be useful to continue the focus on men’s sexual subjectivity but to include women’s voices, perhaps through an examination of representations of male sexuality in women’s accounts of sexuality. On the other hand, I wonder how useful it would be to have had a man’s partner present in the interview, or to give an alternative account of the relationship. The danger here is that in examining alternative accounts of similar situations, one account can be framed as a fairer, more balanced (or partial), or more accurate (misleading) version. Paul Stenner’s (1993) thematic analysis of a heterosexual couple’s account of their relationship is perhaps a model for this kind of endeavour. He avoids these traps and provides a very comprehensive reading of the different, and explicitly gendered, ways each draws on discourses and positions themselves and their partner. Finally, a more far reaching project would be similar to that undertaken by Wendy Hollway (1984; 1984, 1998; 1989) who explored the production of gendered subjectivity. This could explore the production of sexual subjectivity in men and women’s accounts.

The briefest reference to Jessica Benjamin’s (1988; 1995a) work on intersubjectivity hints at another absence in this study - the intersubjective dimension. I found her writings on recognition and especially on recognition in heterosexual relationships very engaging, and regret that it was not within the scope of this thesis to expand on this theoretical work. How possible is a mutual recognition which requires the breaking and remaking of the tension between independence and dependence, for the accounts of male sexuality described in this analysis. The integration of discursive
and psychoanalytic theories is becoming more common; I would hope Benjamin’s work is explored in this context.

There was one specific call for future research that arose out of the survey analysis. There was a small group of young, and usually single, men who reported high internet usage (for sexual representations) and very little communication with friends, family or a partner. These men reported significantly higher sexual anxiety and insecurity, and unusually for this age group a higher incidence of sexual problems, than the other men in the sample. What accounts for these differences and to what extent is the lack of intimate communication or high internet usage implicated? Are there relevant differences between internet communication - chat rooms - and offline communication? To what extent does the internet represent a resource for men seeking knowledge about sexuality, and how do they negotiate the representations contained in that medium? We know very little about the content of the sexual representations that men are engaging with - how different are they to more traditional erotica. Nor do we know how the way these men engage with representations on the internet may be relevant, and whether this is different to video or magazine based erotica. Finally, to what extent is the high proportion of men in this group who spoke English as a second language, significant? The experiences of these men deserve further study.

**A possible critique of the sample - the men I know are not like that**

There is an interesting question around why men, or indeed anyone, take part in sex research. Are they looking for an opportunity to brag about their sexual exploits? Are they seeking sexual excitement through talking about sex with a stranger, a peer or their friends? Do they want to find out if they are like other men, if they are normal, or indeed, if they are better (more successful, more ‘together’) than other men? Do they want to complain about their partner, about their relationship, about women? Do these men take part in other research - are they serial respondents? Across the research - interviews and surveys - I encountered all of these motivations. Does this raise issues about the validity of the research findings?
Some concern is legitimate. There was a sense in the individual interviews that some men in relationships were not happy - that is, they presented a very dissatisfied account of their sexuality. The men who participated in the survey study on the other hand, reported very high levels of satisfaction (relationship and sexual). The finding from the survey, that men who endorse the hegemonic account of male sexuality reported lower sexual and relationship satisfaction would suggest that the men in interviews who adopted the hegemonic account would be less satisfied. It may be then that the men who opted for an individual interview were looking for an opportunity to talk about, and perhaps explore the possibility of changing, their situations. The different methods utilised in this study mitigate some of these concerns. Not only were there different recruitment strategies employed - anonymous recruitment, media and community notices, invitations from acquaintances and friends - but there were different methods of participation - individual interviews, group interviews, a survey. Thus, the accounts that were produced were in response to different questions, different people, different contexts, and likely to have been stimulated by different motivations.

Are the men who take part in sex research different - in meaningful ways - to those who do not? Are there differences between men who take part in anonymous surveys and those who participate in an individual or group interview? Recall the assertions of my colleagues, raised in Chapter 1, who protested that the men they know are not like the men in this study. Do these men (their men) not participate in sex research (and why not)? Indeed, how do I address the protestations of my colleagues, whose partners and friends are apparently not like the men in this study?

The first and most important response is to reiterate that men gave a range of accounts of their sexuality, and many did resist the hegemonic account, some more successfully than others. Other men adopted the hegemonic account, again some more successfully and enthusiastically than others. It is the argument of this thesis that the hegemonic account presented here is the taken for granted account of male sexuality, thus all men will have to negotiate it, even those who reject it do so under considerable pressure to conform.
A second response is that my colleagues’ male friends may not be like the men in this study: they may have resisted the hegemonic account of male sexuality more actively, have found alternative discourses to enact. The question then becomes how do they do this, and this is clearly something that needs to be examined in future research. There is a further issue, however, how do we recruit these men? And why did they not participate in the current study? It may be a failing of the recruitment strategies used in this study that these men did not respond to the calls for participants; theoretical sampling could be used to address this. However, how they would be identified is another issue. I suspect we would not know that they had resisted the hegemonic account until we had interviewed them. An alternative strategy would be to use the very colleagues who claim to know these men, and recruit though this convenience sample.

There is a third response. Can we - and I include myself in this - allow the possibility that the men we know may take up the hegemonic account? It is an account that is available to all men. As has been reiterated throughout this thesis, subjectivity is not unitary and consistent, rather it is fluid, fragmented and multiple. Men will be simultaneously positioned in various discourses, some of which will be contradictory. Thus, the positions men adopt in different contexts will vary. It seems likely then, that the men my colleagues know, like all men, will position themselves differently in relation to male friends, strangers, women with whom they are in an intimate relationship with, and finally, a researcher who asks them to provide an account of their sexuality. Thus, had these men interviewed, they may have adopted similar positions to the men interviewed in this study. An important point to reiterate at the end of this thesis is that the accounts presented in thesis are “one production among an infinite set of possibilities” (Hollway, 1989, p. 41). I would hope that others will continue this project and explore some of the other possibilities of heterosexual male sexuality.
9.3. Parting comments…

If we talk of male sexuality as something inherent and to be assumed in the male species, we tread the path toward establishing the related myth of male sexuality as prowess, as an insatiable urge, one that compels men to act out fantasies of domination over women and others, also the while sustaining the power effects of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’.

(Whitehead, 2002, p. 163)

If the driven male sexuality that constituted the most taken for granted truth in this thesis is understood as something natural and inevitable, then as Whitehead suggests there is no hope for change. More importantly, there is no possibility of acknowledging the fears and anxieties, the struggles, conflicts and ambivalences that many heterosexual men appear to experience in negotiating their sexuality. Indeed, there is a danger that these become pathologised, or framed as dysfunction: a problem for the individual man. As Lynne Segal has noted, it is only in problematising male subjectivity that we can “subvert the taken-for-granted assumption that to be human is to be male and also to be male is in a sense to be all right” (Cited by Wetherell & Griffin, 1992, p. 385). The critical exploration of men’s sexual subjectivity and the role of cultural representations in the production of subjectivity is an important project. In demonstrating the fictionality of hetero-sexual male subj ecthood and how men become sexual subjects, we can recognise the complexities of men’s experiences of sex and sexuality, and begin to look at possibilities for transformation that allow a more positive experience of sexuality for men, and the women they are in relationships with.
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Appendix A. Consent Forms

Appendix A.1. Example of survey consent form

This study investigating masculine sexuality, is being conducted jointly by Assoc Professor Jane Ussher and researcher, Julie Mooney-Somers at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, and Dr Edith Weisberg, Director of Research at the Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research, FPA Health.

We are interested in finding out about images of masculinity and sexuality in Australia, how these images affect how men feel about themselves and their sexuality, and how this influences men’s sexual behaviour. We would also like to find out where men get information on sex, sexuality and relationships, and how men respond to the information they receive.

We would like to invite you to take part in the study. We are looking for heterosexual men, living or working in Sydney, aged 18 years or over. Participation involves completing and returning a survey covering the kind of issues mentioned above.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point without explanation. All of the information we gather is confidential, and any identifying information will be removed from the survey. The survey will be stored securely and will only be seen by the researchers connected with the project. Any data that is published will not contain your name, or other identifying information.

I have understood the above and agree to take part in the masculine sexuality project.

Name……………………………………………

Signature…………………………………….. Date……………………….

Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project further please contact the research office on 02 97726461.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Co-ordinator (tel: 02 47360169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix A.2. Example of interview consent form

This study investigating male sexuality, is being conducted jointly by Assoc Professor Jane Ussher and researcher, Julie Mooney-Somers at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, and Dr Edith Weisberg, Director of Research at the Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research, FPA Health.

We are interested in finding out about images of masculinity and sexuality in Australia, how these images affect how men feel about themselves and their sexuality, and how this influences men’s sexual behaviour. We would also like to find out where men get
information on sex, sexuality and relationships, and how men respond to the information they receive.

Participation involves attending an interview, where you will be asked to talk about what being a man means to you and how this has changed over your life time, your experience of sex, relationships and your sexuality.

The interview will be audio taped and transcribed for analysis. We will provide you with a copy of the interview transcript if you wish. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point without explanation. All of the information we gather is confidential, and will be stored securely and will only be seen by the researchers connected with the project. Any data that is published will not contain your name, or other identifying information.

Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understood the above and agree to take part in this study, and to confirm that you have been given a copy of the Information Sheet.

Name…………………………………

Signature…………………………..                           Date………….

Would you like a copy of the interview transcript?       Yes/No

You can contact the Research Office on 02 9772 6461.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Co-ordinator (tel: 02 47360169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**Appendix A.3. Example of peer interview consent form**

I am a student enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Psychology and as part of my program I am conducting interviews on masculine sexuality. I am being supervised by Julie Mooney-Somers, at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney.

The interviews I am conducting are part of a larger study investigating masculine sexuality which is being conducted jointly by Assoc Professor Jane Ussher and researcher, Julie Mooney-Somers at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, and Dr Edith Weisberg, research director of FPA Health, NSW.

I am interested in finding out about images of masculinity and sexuality in Australia, how these images affect how men feel about themselves and their sexuality, and how this influences men’s sexual behaviour. I would also like to find out where men get information on sex, sexuality and relationships, and how men respond to the information they receive.

I would like to invite you to take part in the study. I am looking for heterosexual men, living or working in Western Sydney, and over the age of 18 years. Participation involves attending an interview, where you will be asked to talk about what being a man means to you and how this has changed over your life time, your experience of sex, relationships and your sexuality. The interview will take place at the Bankstown campus of the University, or at another convenient venue. The interview will be audiotaped and transcribed for analysis - the transcript will only be seen by researchers connected with the project.
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point without explanation. All of the information I gather is confidential, and will be stored securely and will only be seen by the researchers connected with the project. Any data that is published will not contain your name, or other identifying information.

I have understood the above and agree to take part in the masculine sexuality project.

Name…………………………………

Signature…………………………..                           Date………….

Your participation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project further please contact the research office on 02 97726731.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Co-ordinator (tel: 02 47360169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B. Representations

Appendix B.1. Pilot work

This section describes a first attempt to collect representations of male sexuality in mainstream media for later textual analysis. The results were disappointing and unexpected, and detailed analysis was not undertaken. What is presented here is a brief exploration of some methodological and theoretical issues - pilot work in the truest sense of the concept.

The purpose of the intended analysis of representations was to conduct a textual analysis of representations in a sample of Australian media. To this end, a media monitoring company was employed to undertake data collection. The standard method used by these companies is based on keywords and lists of associated phrases, that is, a content analysis. Their brief was to collect all textual references to heterosexual male sexuality in national, metropolitan and regional newspapers, as well as popular, trade and specialist publications in Australia, during January and February 2003. In total 1400 titles were examined, these range in publication frequency from daily to quarterly. To be selected a clipping had to include two keywords from three lists: (a) man, men, male, masculine; masculinity; (b) sex, sexuality, sexuality; (c) heterosexual, heterosexuality.

The exercise produced a disappointing 59 clippings. Nineteen of these did not have any of the specified keywords but did have ‘homosexual’ or ‘homosexuality’; a surprise given no request was made for the inclusion of these keywords in the data collection. On querying this with the media monitoring company, it emerged that the keyword ‘homosexuality’ was added “to be helpful”, as I was clearly interested in sexuality. Another 16 clippings were sourced from papers not available to the general public - mostly papers for the gay community. Finally, two were excluded because they had only one keyword hit; they were about men and fatherhood.

Once the erroneously collected clippings had been removed, there were 22 clippings left that included two of the three keywords - heterosexual, male/man, sex/sexuality - and were what could be considered mass print media. An examination of the content of these clippings revealed five subject categories: non-heterosexuals, reproduction, women, sex crimes, and miscellaneous (see Table B.1.).
Table B.1. Content analysis of media clippings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Category</th>
<th>Sub Category/Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-heterosexuals</td>
<td>Homosexuality and religion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance, equal rights, or legal change</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviews of theatre, books, television</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td>A heterosexual couple using a website designed for</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lesbians seeking sperm donors for IVF treatment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Why women shave their bodies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex research has treated women’s sexuality like</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>men’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with a woman who makes pornography</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex crimes</td>
<td>Sexual crimes committed by men</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Opinion piece on Australian identity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outcome then, was a very small sample of material, most of which was not about heterosexual men. Obviously, it is not that heterosexual male sexuality is not represented in mainstream media. It would be disingenuous to suggest that in the various editions of 1400 publications across Australia, heterosexual male sexuality was only discussed 59 times, or less when we remove the vast majority of references that were not about heterosexual male sexuality at all. This echoes the difficulties described by Richard Dyer in the opening to his chapter *Male Sexuality in the Media*:

> One would think that writing about images of male sexuality would be as easy as anything. We live in a world saturated with images, drenched in sexuality. But this is one of the reasons why it is in fact so difficult to write about. Male sexuality is a bit like air - you breathe it in all the time, but you aren’t aware of it much. Until quite recently, what was talked about was the mysterious topic of female sexuality, or else, the subject of deviant male practices. Ordinary male sexuality was simply sexuality, and everybody knew what it was. (1985, p. 28)

Male heterosexuality is everywhere, but difficult to grasp. In the case of the media clippings being discussed here, heterosexual is a silent signifier (Smart, 1996). There are two clippings, examined below, that illustrate this issue particularly well. In two of the media clippings where male heterosexuality was explicitly mentioned, it was to prevent potential misunderstandings. In the first clipping about drink spiking, the journalist adds the qualifier ‘heterosexual’, because it is otherwise unimaginable that heterosexual men could be the victims of sexual assault or drink spiking.

> And men - including heterosexual men - are just as likely as women to have their drink spiked, and be sexually assaulted. (Lawrence & O'Shea, 2003, p. 3)

In the second clipping, an interview with a woman who makes pornographic films, the journalist has inserted “[heterosexual]” to clarify whom the interviewee is talking about, though it is not clear that she intended to make this distinction.

> In Lilith I wanted to arouse men and women, even gay men and women, it is not always difficult to do this at the same time. [Heterosexual] men are quite
simple and can be aroused by gynaecological photos; women are more subtle and need to think about it. (Hussey, 2003, p. 15)

In both of these examples, the presence or absence of ‘heterosexual’ changes the meaning. In both cases, it would otherwise not have been clear that it was heterosexual men - or just heterosexual men - that were being talked about. That it was necessary to clarify in both of these examples, suggests there are dominant discourses about male heterosexuality that make available particular knowledges. It is these knowledges, accounts of heterosexual male sexuality, which are the focus of this analysis of representations.

In terms of the collection of data for subsequent analysis then, this was a relatively unproductive exercise, as there were very few representations of heterosexual male sexuality in the clippings collected. However, what this undertaking does establish is that given the silence around explicitly naming male heterosexuality, a keyword or content based collection of data is not appropriate.

Appendix B.2. Magazine articles used in discourse analysis sample

Table B.2. The articles that made up the sample for discourse analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Article title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Have you met your match?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Grow your own penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Stressing that they want to be single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Rise and shine: sunflower seeds could save your sex life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Affair deal: guilt drives some guys to do spring cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Single white male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Your sperm are duds!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Hand out this lesson in love: press her passion buttons with a sensual massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Look who opened her big mouth. Out of the mouths of babes - the best ways to turn her on with lip service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Like we’re not confused enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>What women want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Turn a friend into a lover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Rose decoder: you want to send her roses, but what colour they be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Venus attacks! We attempt to explain that enigma called ‘woman’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>The food of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>The good sex work out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Why her breasts grab you. Every man has his own set of turn-ons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Men’s health passion poll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Why would she marry you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Romantic getaways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Be a babe magnet. What should a man wear to look sexy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Ask the Sex Doc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>This dating life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Ask Dave the Barman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Score a perfect 10 in the bedroom - the master craftsman’s guide to sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 01</td>
<td>MH</td>
<td>Sex boosts your flu-fighting ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oct 01  MH  Sexually acquired reactive arthritis
Oct 01  MH  Cancer risk for Casanovas
Oct 01  MH  Hairy signals: what her hair is saying to you
Oct 01  MH  Problem reproduction: work hassles are bad news for your sperm production
Oct 01  MH  How low will she go? Spying software can leave you exposed
Oct 01  MH  Who will get divorced first? Will you part ways
Oct 01  MH  Pass her home inspection
Oct 01  MH  Johnny be good. What to wear to bed: a user guide to condoms
Oct 01  MH  Still call yourself a man. A checklist of things that say: “I am man, hear me roar”
Oct 01  MH  How to be in like… me. Errol Flynn.
Oct 01  MH  Ask the Sex Doc
Oct 01  MH  This dating life
Oct 01  MH  Ask Dave the Barman
Nov 01  MH  Sex so good she’ll shout you breakfast
Nov 01  MH  Is she fit for you: her gym behaviour an offer clues to her personality
Nov 01  MH  High-tech romance: forget flower, win her heart with hi-tech wizardry
Nov 01  MH  Perfect prose: sharpen your message of love
Nov 01  MH  Dating damage control: something not going right? Follow this guide to manage even the most out-of-control situations
Nov 01  MH  Who will become impotent first? Will you go limp?
Nov 01  MH  Ask the Sex Doc
Nov 01  MH  This dating life
Nov 01  MH  Ask Dave the Barman
Dec 01  MH  What would Casanova do
Dec 01  MH  14 things not to say to a woman
Dec 01  MH  How to have a one-night stand without making a complete mess of things
Dec 01  MH  An insolvent sperm count
Dec 01  MH  Don’t mix your medications
Dec 01  MH  Don’t lose you mojo
Dec 01  MH  Watching SBS can make you a better lover
Dec 01  MH  On her breast behaviour
Dec 01  MH  Ask the Sex Doc
Dec 01  MH  This dating life
Dec 01  MH  Ask Dave the Barman
Jun 02  FHM  The knowledge: get sex on demand
Jun 02  FHM  Sex explained. The sex miracle
Jun 02  FHM  Dress Wayne Carey
Jun 02  FHM  The FHM rules
Jun 02  FHM  Piste talk - master the art of chalet chit-chat and experience a bevy of bunnies in your bunk-bed abode
Jun 02  FHM  Just a little off the top, please
Jun 02  FHM  The world of sex
Jun 02  FHM  My score of hotties
Jun 02  FHM  Mobile filth
Jun 02  FHM  Virtual carnality
Jun 02  FHM  Life support/bionic
Aug 02  FHM  Woo like the animals
Aug 02  FHM  The gigolo
Aug 02  FHM  Private dicks get dirty
Aug 02  FHM  The 2002 sex survey results
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>The <em>FHM</em> biosphere - batten down the hatches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>17 ways to meet women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Life support/bionic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Wedded bliss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Guide to sloth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>The penis museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>I loved his money, he loved my breasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Clash of the titans: mates vs girlfriends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Life support/bionic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Cook her pants off!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Reporter kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td><em>FHM</em>'s one-night stand test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Viagra for lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Nudes, aliens and the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Girls on the couch: Breasts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Under the thumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Girl mag watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Sex tips for women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>How to improve test cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 02</td>
<td>FHM</td>
<td>Life support/bionic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C. Interviews

Appendix C.1. Interview schedules

Interview schedule for semi-structured individual interviews with a peer interviewer

Demographics and background
Age, marital status, employment, education, cultural background. Tell me a bit about yourself and your relationship history.

Intimacy and Sex
What does the term intimacy mean to you?
Have it always meant this?
How has it changed?
Growing up;
Through different relationships;
In current relationship.

Have you experienced intimacy?
Tell me about when you have experienced intimacy – when you felt an other was being intimate with you. How did that make you feel?

Have you ever had any difficulties with intimacy – e.g. you wanting and an other not being able to, or visa versa?

Do you have to have intimacy to have sex?
Have you always felt intimate with sexual partners?

Where do you think your ideas about intimacy have come from – maybe family, partners, peers. How does this happen: through discussion, through example, etc.

Communication and Sex
What does the term communication mean to you?

How important is communication in a relationship?
Why is communication important?

Is it different in different kinds of relations?
Have you had good communication in a relationship?
How do you develop good communication in a relationship?

Tell me about good communication

Are there things you find it easier, or more difficult, to talk about with a partner?
How important is communication for sex?
*Have you talked with your partners about sexual activities you like and dislike?*
*Have you talked with your partners about contraception/safer sex?*

Can you think back to a time when you had a difficulty talking about contraception/safe sex/likes or dislikes, with a partner. Can you tell me about that.

**Representations and Sex**
What images/ideas/representations/depictions are you aware of, in the media (what ever media is relevant to them) – about men and sex or sexuality?
*How relevant are these to your life?*
*Do you believe them?*
*Do you think they are real or a fantasy?*
*Are they important for you?*
*Do they function as a role model, as something to be emulated?*
*Has this changed over your life?*

How do they make you feel about yourself, about sex, about your partners?
*What kind of expectations do they encourage?*
*Are these expectations met? If not, how does that make you feel?*

**Interview schedule for narrative individual interviews within an unknown interviewer**

What I’d like to do today is to talk about your experience of your sexuality. What I’m interested in is what your sexuality means to you, and how it might have changed in different situations and over time.

One of the things I’ve been thinking about is the contradiction many men face between dominant ideas of what it means to be a man, and women’s expectations of men. So on the one hand there is the idea that you should be strong, unemotional, in control, sexually aggressive, and sexually skilful, and on the other hand there are women’s expectations of you, which may be quite different.

Have you experienced this contradiction? Can you tell me about it?

What does (your) sexuality mean to you – how has this changed?
What does it mean to you to be a heterosexual man?
What are the expectations and pressure on you – as a man, a heterosexual man, a partner?
What do you think women’s expectations of you are - do you try to meet them?
Do women have different expectations of you to the expectations you have of yourself (talking about relationships, sex, etc)?

**Key Words**
Heterosexual male sexuality; Sex; Performance; Desire; Relationships; Anxiety, fear; Problems; OWN EXPERIENCE

**Interview schedule for semi-structured individual interviews with an unknown interviewer**
What I’d like to do today is to talk about what your sexuality means to you. I’m interested in what you think and feel about your sexuality and your sexual experiences with women.

1. I’d like to start by asking you to take a minute to imagine an ordinary guy, Mr Average; what can you tell me about him in terms of sex and sexuality?

2. Is the Mr Average you just imagined different to the Mr Average portrayed in films, TV, advertising, etc?
   Prompt – in what kind of ways is he different?

3. How like Mr Average are you?
   Prompt – how are you different? Similar?

Up to now, we’ve been talking about men in general, I’d like you to think now about your own experience, about what you think and feel about your sexuality and your sexual experiences with women.

4. If you could wave a magic wand and everything would be exactly as you want it, how would your sexuality be?
   Prompt – sexually, how would it be?

5. Is the ideal you just described different to your own experience?
   Prompt – in what kind of ways is it different?

6. How do you feel about the difference between your own experience and the ideal?

7. If you think about yourself now, what are your needs and expectations?
   Prompt – in terms of sex and sexuality.

8. Do you have any concerns about sex, or about your sexuality?
   Prompt – I mean a whole range of things here: from asking your mates how often they have sex to going to see your doctor about a medical concern.

9. We’ve talked a lot about sex and sexuality, what do those terms mean to you?

10. Do you think women’s experience of sex and sexuality is different to men’s?

11. Finally, is there anything we’ve missed?

Interview schedule for semi-structured group interviews with a peer interviewer

Introductory briefing

“Okay let’s start. Firstly, I’d like to thank you all for coming this evening. My name is interviewer, and I’m a student in the School of Psychology, at the University of Western Sydney. I’m conducting this focus group as part of a project looking at male sexuality, being conducted by the university, and FPA Health. I’m interested in men’s experience of their sexuality, in what they think and feel about their sexuality
and their sexual experience with women. The results of this study will be used to improve services offered to men in the area of sexuality and relationships.

I am interested in what you think; there is no right or wrong answer. I’m also interested in differing points of view so feel free to disagree. I’d like to hear from everyone. This means I may interrupt you if you’re talking a lot or call on you if you’ve said very little, please don’t be put off by this, I’m just trying to make sure everyone gets a chance to talk.

I’m tape recording this group so I won’t miss anything you say. The tape recording will be transcribed. All of the information gathered is confidential, will be stored securely and will only be seen by the researchers connected with the project. Any data that is published will not contain your name, or other identifying information.

I would appreciate it if you could all speak clearly and try not to interrupt each other. If you want to comment on what someone else has said, wait until they are finished. Please remember, what is said in this room should stay here, please respect each other’s privacy. Finally, you are free to leave the group and we can stop for a break if we need to. I am very grateful for your time and involvement.

I’d like to start by going round the group and getting everyone to introduce themselves – just first names and your favourite flavour of ice cream (or something similar-not too personal or in-depth).”

The Questions

1. I’d like to start by asking you all to take a minute to imagine an ordinary guy, Mr Average; what can you tell me about him in terms of sex and sexuality?

2. Is the Mr Average you just imagined different to the Mr Average portrayed in films, TV, advertising, etc?
   Prompt – in what kind of ways is he different?

3. How like Mr Average are you?
   Prompt – how are you different? Similar?

Up to now, we’ve been talking about men in general, I’d like you to think now about your own experience, about what you think and feel about your sexuality and your sexual experiences with women.

4. If you could wave a magic wand and everything would be exactly as you want it, how would your sexuality be?
   Prompt – sexually, how would it be?

5. Is the ideal you just described different to your own experience?
   Prompt – in what kind of ways is it different?

6. How do you feel about the difference between your own experience and the ideal?

7. If you think about yourself now, what are your needs and expectations?
Prompt – in terms of sex and sexuality.

8. Do you have any concerns about sex, or about your sexuality?

Prompt – I mean a whole range of things here: from asking your mates how often they have sex to going to see your doctor about a medical concern.

9. We’ve talked a lot about sex and sexuality, what do those terms mean to you?

10. Do you think women’s experience of sex and sexuality is different to men’s?

11. Finally, is there anything we’ve missed?

Appendix C.2. Coding frames

Table C1 is the global coding frame developed from the preliminary readings of a selection of interviews, from discussions with colleagues and from field notes made during the interviewing stage. Table C2 is a more detailed coding frame for the Meaning of Sex theme; this reflects the detailed coding undertaken for the analysis presented in Chapter 6 and 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major theme</th>
<th>Minor themes</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Average/ordinary guy as representation of ‘man’ VS Other representations</td>
<td>Representations of Mr A Comparison of self to Mr A Women and Mr A</td>
<td>Who is he, what do we know about him, what can he be or do How like him What function does he serve Level of satisfaction with the image of the ordinary man (limited, narrow range of behaviours/ways of being)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men in relation to men</td>
<td>Need to belong, to identify Looking for acceptance from other men - men give the nod (you’re a good man) Connections between men - powerful - anxiety about the connections and what they mean but simultaneously desired When does connection become sexual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>This is about men’s reputation, status, standing, position, character amongst other men and amongst women - things that are done to establish or protect rep.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety about sexuality and body</td>
<td>Reactions to own bodily feelings and reactions - what do they mean Fear of own sexuality Physical reaction but what does it mean Physical responses mixed with emotional responses Trusting own body Relationship between action and meaning - ways of giving meaning to behaviour (pleasure, desire).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A lot of talk about sexual orientation - jokes or homosexuality brought up by men. Joking about inadequacy, performance, penis size.

Women not what they seem; say one thing mean another; don’t know what they want; manipulative; play innocent

The lie of attraction - initial attraction is just a teaser, not really like that;

Sex and contraception - having to trust, being caught, being trapped - men vulnerable.

Danger of getting pregnant

Danger of them turning morning after one night stand (was ok)

Have control - run the house, run the family, run the relationship, run the sex

Women allowing men to think in control.

Women as precious/delicate/princess, not to be upset/touched (man as protector-bastard, protecting her from himself)

If tell what want then use it to get what they want - bargaining chip (women control sex)

Approval?? What done to get it from woman, Beautiful women or perfect women

Fear of being alone. wanting to be needed

The strategies/coping mechanisms/defences employed

Wanting to be needed

Relationship as guarantee against loss - if you marry her she is yours

Having mistress, other relationships waiting in the wings, affairs, etc.

anxiety at this need

Relationships

Failure - not being able to do commitment, long-term; not a success

Damaged or ill equipped for relationships

Getting lost or compromising too much or being a mirror or being responsive but not demanding

Longing for relationships - idealisation/romanticised by single guys.

Trade off -

Relat will be good if sex is good.

Love lost, fantasy.

The one woman/relationship who was perfect/ideal, The fantasy of this, the longing for this, the memory of this

What does this represent - safety, something lost, something missed

Needs (dependency?)

Awareness of needs

Legitimacy and sense of entitlement

Risk of recognising/articulating needs - fear of rejection/ridicule of needs (ie self) - fear of woman

Expectations - disappointment - pain

Expect nothing - worst that can happen is nothing; happy when something better transpires

Protecting woman from man’s needs (presumably to do with his feelings about these needs as well as their perception of woman) (this is also present occasionally in the interviews in terms of men protecting me)

Men do not know about emotional stuff so woman’s responsibility - she knows best.

Needs being forced into particular format (story
book, good) but ending up coming out
inappropriately or bursting, losing control.
If share needs then vulnerable ‘they had what I
wanted...the prices went up’
Negotiation of needs -
Staying in unsatisfying situations until something
better comes along/ making do/ etc
Doubt and uncertainty about what they want, what
partners want, what to do, is this it
Sex as a way to something else - companionship,
etc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship vs single life</th>
<th>Significant different for men in either category - for example, sex as physical act with no meaning outside, sex as act of intimacy and love inside/ sex as a means to connection/love.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>major issue, line between it being about sex and it being about women??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What men do to get sex, access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women control access to sex, and the consequences of this for men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big difference here between the single and married men - way each talks about the others situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The idea of transaction - something for sex with associated ideas around honesty and deception. (perhaps also as a means to protect reputations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance, love, emotional</td>
<td>Positioned as something women want (often in relation to; in order to give access to sex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement, intimacy</td>
<td>Occasionally men talked about their own desire for this, sadness about the loss of, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some men talked very explicitly about wanting this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection, completion, acceptance, exploration, Being made fun of because wanting this - by other men.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning of sex</th>
<th>Sex as power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conquer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking about the power of sex and wanting to dilute the power (the fear?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anger at the reality of sex and the meaning it has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex as acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex as bargaining chip; tool; weapon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as biological</td>
<td>Procreate, animal, biological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The standard explanation of sex and men’s behaviour in terms of biology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The way this functioned at different stages of life was different - younger fuck around (don’t get pregnant); older settle for family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and women</td>
<td>Women not knowing what they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfying women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pride at satisfying women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s lack of interest in own pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as commodity</td>
<td>The idea of transaction - something for sex with associated ideas around honesty and deception. (perhaps also as a means to protect reputations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What men do to get sex, access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women control access to sex, and the consequences of this for men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex as bargaining chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual needs</td>
<td>Inevitable because male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs must be controlled and dominated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

397
Represent weakness, loss
Men trapped in physical urges/demands/needs
Men keeping urges under control in order to meet cultural/partner expectations - and work done/strategies employed

A lot of the men talk about sex within their relationships as if it exists separately (e.g., that sex should still happen when relationships are not going well)
Wanting nothing but sex from partner

Table C.2. Detailed coding frame: ‘Meaning of sex’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme (i)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex as power</td>
<td>Heavy with meaning</td>
<td>Talking about the power of sex and wanting to dilute the power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anger at reality of sex and meaning it has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex as an expression of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom of sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conquer or status or reputation</td>
<td>Path to status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conquer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting used by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Look what I can do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominance or power</td>
<td>Sex as bargaining chip, tool, weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women control access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex as acceptance (and so who has the power to confer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>Men using sex as punishment (usually by denying access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Standard explanation of sex and behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as biological or physical</td>
<td>Drives or urges</td>
<td>Function and relevancy at different stages in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex diff explanations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age &amp; stage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differing expectations from men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representations of woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfying women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pride at satisfying women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t like sex or insatiable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not wanting sex, having different needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not into sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefer the other stuff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Women not being responsible for sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women not taking responsibility for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s lack of interest in own pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women not knowing what they want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex not important</td>
<td>Sex not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use sex</td>
<td>Women’s using sex (see power and commodity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

398
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex as commodity</td>
<td>Transaction - something for sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honesty and deception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bargaining chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not worth cost Exchange</td>
<td>The cost of sex being too high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Something for sex - man gives X, women gives sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What men do to get access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generally financial cost - drinks, dinner, cash, domestic, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not including love or intimacy or holding or etc BUT perhaps it should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women use to bargain</td>
<td>Women control access/sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women using access to sex as a bargaining chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withholding sex to get something (not revenge or punishment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for sex</td>
<td>Brothels, sex workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allusions to paying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes within relationship</td>
<td>How meaning of sex changes throughout relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as acceptance or connection</td>
<td>Sex as demonstration of acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women initiating as expression of acceptance of him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as pleasure</td>
<td>Fun, hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure in her pleasure</td>
<td>Wanting to satisfy partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pleasure from partners satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship vs Single</td>
<td>Significant diff among men in relation to meaning of sex, meaning of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How changes/d in and out of relat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as performance</td>
<td>Skill or technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wanting to satisfy partner; satisfaction from partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pleasure/satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Initiating and what it means (being wanted) ??Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not responsible</td>
<td>Not wanting to be responsible for initiating (rejection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Wanting to satisfy partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing responsibility</td>
<td>Taking responsibility meaning you want the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready and waiting</td>
<td>Taking the opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation that always interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues around consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex for reproduction - no desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex as negative</td>
<td>Representations of sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representations of men’s sexuality (beasts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

399
### Appropriate sex vs inappropriate sex
(reps?)

- Perception that sex or desires are wrong or illegal
- Consequence of sex - bad or negative
- Dangerous

### Anxiety
- Getting older
- Not being desirable
- Performance
- Losing control
- Being left or rejection
- Trust
- Unacceptable desires

### Mostly around aging

### Lack of sex or access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describing situation</th>
<th>Efforts to change situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masturbation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Substitutes for sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex as barrier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The lack of sex as preventing normal life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Excuses

- The reasons for lack of sex
- Men not wanting
- Women not wanting b/c illness or age
- Women not wanting b/c lack of interest
- Women not wanting b/c social
- Women not wanting b/c abuse
- Women not wanting b/c children
- Women not wanting b/c power

### Just sex or empty

- Just sex
- Not just sex, not ending at sex - getting into or becoming more, becoming entangled or connected or involved

### Wanting 'just sex'

- Just an act
- Physical with no emotion

### Was or is 'just sex'

- Descriptions of current/past

### Conflicted or confused

- Wanting emotion, wanting more
Appendix D. Survey

Appendix D.1. The survey

We would like to know what you think and feel about your sexuality, and your sexual experiences with women. This study is being conducted by Assoc Professor Jane Ussher and researcher, Julie Mooney-Somers at the School of Psychology, University of Western Sydney, and Dr Edith Weisberg, Director of Research at the Sydney Centre for Reproductive Health Research, FPA Health. The results of this research will be used to improve services offered to men in the area of sexuality and relationships. This survey is the first stage in a larger study looking at male sexuality. We are looking for men to take part in the next stage (an individual interview or group discussion). If you are interested in participating or would like to hear more, please complete the form on page 7, and we’ll contact you soon.

This survey is designed for men who identify as heterosexual (who are primarily or exclusively sexually attracted to women). Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point without explanation. All of the information we gather is strictly confidential, it will be stored securely and seen only by the researchers connected with the project. Any data that is published will not contain your name, or other identifying information. If you would like to discuss the project further please contact Julie Mooney-Somers at the research office: 02 97726461

Most of the questions require you to tick the response that best reflects your experience; a few require additional information. Please read each question carefully and follow the instructions for that question. When you are finished send the survey back in the envelope supplied.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Section 1: Sexual Knowledge

In this section we are interested in finding out where you get ideas and information about sex and sexuality. There are lots of places we get ideas and information about sex and sexuality; some are more reliable or more helpful than others. For example, you might find out about a new sexual technique in an erotic movie, in a chat room or a letters/problem page in a magazine; or you might discover the answer to a sexual problem you were experiencing through discussing it with your partner, reading information from your doctor or watching a program on television.

Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number (e.g. 2 3 4 5 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number (e.g. 2 3 4 5 6).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. How often do you discuss sex with the following people?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Male friend(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Female friend(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Doctor or Therapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Family planning services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Telephone help lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Telephone chat lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. How often do you watch sex in the following?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Erotic videos - rented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Erotic videos - bought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Adult Movie Channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. How often do you read about sex in the following?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Men’s magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Erotic magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Women’s magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Drug company leaflets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Health Edu leaflets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Medical textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. How often do visit, or participate in the following for their sexual content?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Internet chat-rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Internet web sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Internet newsgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Personal web-cam sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next two questions are about ideas and information about sexual difficulties or problems. You do not have to have experienced a sexual difficulty to have talked or read about it - for example, someone may have talked to you about their own difficulty, or you may have read an article in a magazine.

Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

1. never 2. less than once a year 3. several times a year 4. every month 5. every week 6. every day

5. How often do you discuss sexual difficulties or problems with the following people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Male friend(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Female friend(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Partner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Doctor or Therapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Family planning services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Telephone help lines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Telephone chat lines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How often do you read about sexual difficulties or problems in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Men’s magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Erotic magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Women’s magazines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Drug company leaflets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Health Edu leaflets</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. Medical textbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. Books</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Section 2: Sexual Beliefs

In this section we are interested in your beliefs about male sexuality. This is not a test - we are interested in what you think. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following list.

Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

1. agree 2. slightly agree 3. neither agree nor disagree 4. slightly disagree 5. disagree

1. It is unacceptable for men to reveal their ideas about sex
2. In sex, it’s a man’s performance that counts
3. A man is supposed to initiate sexual contact
4. Men usually want sex, regardless of where they are
5. A man never really wants “only” a hug or caress
6. The ultimate sexual goal in men’s mind is intercourse
7. Lack of an erection will always spoil sex for a man
8. Sexual activity must end with an orgasm for a man to feel satisfied
9. Men don’t really like to plan their sexual experiences
10. Most men are sexually well adjusted
11. Men are always ready for sex
12. A man should be careful to hide his feelings
13. It is not natural for a man
14. It is unacceptable for men to reveal their ideas about sex
15. In sex, it’s a man’s performance that counts
16. A man is supposed to initiate sexual contact
17. Men believe that every sexual act should include intercourse
18. Any kind of sexual activity for a man requires an erection
19. Quiet, lazy sex is usually not all that satisfying for a man
20. For men, natural sex means “just doing it instinctively”
21. Most men have healthy attitudes toward sex
22. Men should not be held, cuddled
23. Sex is a pressure-filled activity for most men
24. Men are responsible for choosing sexual positions
25. Men usually never get enough sex
26. An erection is considered by almost all men as vital for sex
27. Men consider sex artificial if it is pre-planned
28. Most men don’t want to assume the passive role in sex
29. For men, it is important
to be monogamous
14. Men are almost always concerned with their sexual performances
15. Many men are dissatisfied with any bodily contact which is not followed by sexual activity
16. Men are not sexually satisfied with any behaviour other than intercourse

to be able to go all night.
30. For men, kissing and touching are merely the preliminaries to sexual activity
31. Most men have realistic insight into their sexual preferences and desires
32. From a man’s perspective, good sex usually has an ‘earth shattering’ aspect to it

Section 3: Relationships
In this section we are interested in your current relationships and sexual activity, with women.

1. Are you currently in relationships with women? O Yes O No (√)
If no, please go to question 3

2. In general, how would you rate your overall relationship with your female partner(s)?
For each item, rate your relationship on a scale of 1 to 7. For example, an answer of 4 would be neither good or bad, neither unpleasant nor pleasant, neither negative or positive, etc.

a. Very bad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very good
b. Very unpleasant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very pleasant
c. Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very positive
d. Very unsatisfying 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very satisfying
e. Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very valuable

3. Are you currently sexually active with a woman/women? O Yes O No (√)
If no, please go to question 6

4. Overall, how would you describe your sexual relationship(s) with women?
For each item, rate your relationship on a scale of 1 to 7. For example, an answer of 4 would be neither good or bad, neither unpleasant nor pleasant, neither negative or positive, etc.

a. Very bad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very good
b. Very unpleasant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very pleasant
c. Very negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very positive
d. Very unsatisfying 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very satisfying
e. Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very valuable

5. Please indicate your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your current sexual relationship(s) with women.
Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>undecided</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
a. I have satisfying orgasms 1 2 3 4 5 g. After sex I feel relaxed, fulfilled 1 2 3 4 5
b. I feel that foreplay with my partner is very arousing 1 2 3 4 5 h. I am sexually attracted to my partner 1 2 3 4 5
c. My partner makes me feel sexually desirable 1 2 3 4 5 i. I am dissatisfied with my partner as a sexual partner 1 2 3 4 5
d. I do not have good communication with my partner about sex 1 2 3 4 5 j. I am pleased with the intensity of sexual activity in which my partner and I engage 1 2 3 4 5
e. My partner makes it clear that I provide her with a great 1 2 3 4 5 k. I am pleased with the frequency with which my
6. Are you engaging in sexual activity with women as often as you would like?  O Yes O No (✓)
If yes, please go to section 4

7. Would you like to be engaging in more or less sexual activity with women? O More O Less (✓)

8. Why are you not engaging in sexual activity at the level to which you desire?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section 4: Sexual Feelings and Behaviours

In this section we are interested in how you feel about your sexual interactions with women, and how you behave in sexual situations. During the last year how often have you experienced the following feelings or behaviours?

Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>once</td>
<td>occasionally</td>
<td>regularly</td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I refuse certain things in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I do not know how to deal with sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. I find it hard to state clearly what I would like in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Sexual touching scares me at first</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I am afraid that my sexual partner does not find me exciting</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I show little initiative when I am having sex with someone</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I try to influence my sexual partner with flattery</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. When others flirt with me I do not know what to do</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I try to get what I want by talking my sexual partner into things</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I doubt whether I should have engaged in this sexual encounter</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. I let be known what I do not want in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Engaging in sexual relations is a stressful experience for me</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. I do not know what I want in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. I talk about the necessity of contraception</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. I feel I have little influence on what happens</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I feel uncertain about what my sexual partner would like in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. I have difficulty talking about sex with my sexual partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. I discuss condom use with my partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19. I try not to show my disappointment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20. I use all my charm to influence my sexual partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. I feel uncertain about what I want in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22. When I have sexual desires I worry what to do</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. When I have sexual desires I worry what to do</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. If there is anything I do not like in sex, I say so right away</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I am afraid that I do not come across very well in sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I try to seduce my sexual partner to do what I want
I feel uncertain about my body while having sex
I make it very clear what I want in sex
When I meet someone that I find attractive, I feel uncertain about my body while having sex
When I meet someone that I find attractive, I feel insecure about my appearances

Section 5: Sexual Functioning

In this section we are interested in your sexual functioning.

1. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your sexual functioning?
   Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 satisfied</th>
<th>2 somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>3 neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>4 somewhat dissatisfied</th>
<th>5 dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Your overall sexual functioning?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>d. Your ability to become aroused?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Your ability to achieve orgasm or ejaculation?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>e. Your ability to control your orgasm or ejaculation?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The quality of your orgasm or ejaculation?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Have you ever experienced any of the following?
   Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 not at all</th>
<th>2 once</th>
<th>3 occasionally</th>
<th>4 regularly</th>
<th>5 often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Lack of interest or desire for sex</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>d. Difficulties getting an erection</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lack of interest in your sexual partner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>e. Difficulties achieving ejaculation (not being able to come)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Difficulties becoming sexually aroused</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>f. Difficulties maintaining an erection (coming too soon)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Have you ever sought help for a sexual problem?  O Yes  O No (√)
   If no, please go to section 6

4. Please describe the sexual problem, when you experienced it, and what treatment you received?

Section 6: Sexual Desire and Activity

In this section we are interested in situations where you have engaged in any sexual activity with a woman, when you didn’t really feel like it. We are talking about a situation in which a partner initiates some type of sexual activity which you don’t want to do, but you participate anyway. You might feel tired or not turned on; you might not feel sexually attracted to your partner; or you might not like engaging in that particular sexual activity. Your partner does not know that you did not want to take part.
We are not talking about situations where you tease a partner and tell her ‘no’ when really you want to engage in that activity; or where a partner pressures you or forces you to participate.

1. Have you ever engaged in any sexual activity that a partner wanted, which you did not want to take part in?
   O Yes  O No (√)

If no, go to section 7

2. How often have you engaged in the following sexual activities, when you did not want to?
   Please use the scale below, and circle the appropriate number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 not at all</th>
<th>2 once</th>
<th>3 occasionally</th>
<th>4 regularly</th>
<th>5 often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
   a. Kissing | 1 2 3 4 5 | e. Receiving oral sex | 1 2 3 4 5 |
   b. Hugging | 1 2 3 4 5 | f. Vaginal intercourse | 1 2 3 4 5 |
   c. Touching | 1 2 3 4 5 | g. Anal intercourse | 1 2 3 4 5 |
   d. Giving oral sex | 1 2 3 4 5 |

3. When you have engaged in a sexual activity that you did not want, what was the main reason(s) for taking part?
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

4. When you have engaged in a sexual activity when you did not want, were there any good things as a result of taking part? please describe.
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

5. When you engaged in a sexual activity when you did not want, were there any bad things as a result of taking part? please describe.
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________

Section 7: Demographics

Finally, some routine personal information so we can get some idea of who filled in the survey.

1. What is your age? ____________________

2. What level of education have you completed?
   Primary School O
   School Certificate O
   Higher School Certificate O
   Technical/Trade Qualification O
   Undergraduate Degree O
   Postgraduate Degree O
   Other O

3. What is your marital status?
   Single O
   Married/De facto O
   Separated/Divorced/ O

4. What is your home postcode? ____________________

5. What is your employment status?
   Full time employed O
   Part time/causal employed O
   Unemployed O
   Pension or Benefit O
   Retired O
   Student O
   Other O

6. What is your sexual orientation?
   Heterosexual, straight O
   Bisexual O
   Homosexual, gay O

7. What is your annual income?
   Less than $20000 O
   $20000 - 29999 O
   $30000 - 39999 O
   $40000 - 49999 O
   $50000 - 59999 O
   $60000 - 69999 O
   More than $70000 O

8. What country were you born in? ____________________

9. Do you have children living at home?
   No O
   Yes O
   Sometimes - joint O

10. What is your annual income? O
   O
   O
   O
   O
   O
   O

11. What country were you born in? ____________________
4. What is your occupation?

__________________________

8. What language do you speak at home?

__________________________

12. Are you a practising member of a religious group?

✓

No O

Yes O

13. How would you describe the cultural and/or religious group to which you belong?

(e.g. Chinese-Australian, Irish, Aboriginal, Lebanese-Australian, Australian, Muslim, Jewish.)

_____________________________________________________________

14. Did you fill in this survey with someone else?

✓

No

Yes, my partner

Yes, a friend(s)

Yes, other

O O O O

Section 8: Comment

1. Please use this space if you would like to add anything to your answers, or to comment on the survey or how you felt about filling it in.

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

2. FPA Health aim to provide accurate and helpful information to men about sex and sexuality. Do you have any suggestions about what services or information would be helpful to you?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this survey, please return it in the attached envelope.

To hear more about the next stage of the study, fill in the form on the next page.

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Nepean Human Ethics Review Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Co-ordinator (tel: 02 47360169). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D.2. Correlation Matrix for single and married men

Table D1 reports the correlations between the sexuality measures and men’s endorsement of hegemonic male sexuality (SAMSS). Separate Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated for married/de facto men and for single men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMSS</th>
<th>GMRel</th>
<th>GMSex</th>
<th>SexSat</th>
<th>AnxIns</th>
<th>ProCon</th>
<th>DefCon</th>
<th>SexAnx</th>
<th>FnSat</th>
<th>FnProb</th>
<th>UWtSex</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SAMSS - Stereotypes About Male Sexual Scale; GMRel - General Relationship Satisfaction; GMSex - Sexual Relationship Satisfaction; SexSat - Sexual Satisfaction; AnxIns - Anxious Insecurity; ProCon - Proactive Control; DefCon - Defensive Control; SexAnx - Sexual Anxiety; FnSat - Sexual Functioning Satisfaction; FnProb - Sexual Functioning Problems; UWtSex - Unwanted Sexual Activity

S - single men; M - men in de facto or married relationships
*p < .05, **p < .01

* Age was a continuous variable in this analysis

Table only includes single and married men, thus n = 390
### Appendix D.3. Sexual knowledge source groups

Table D2 reports the median for each knowledge source by the three knowledge source groups identified by the cluster analysis.

**Table D.2. Frequency of sources of sexual knowledge by knowledge source group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of sexual knowledge</th>
<th>SexRepGrp</th>
<th>Talkers</th>
<th>Restained Communicators</th>
<th>Net Surfers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male friends</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female friends</td>
<td>monthly</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning services</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone help lines</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug company leaflets</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health education leaflets</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical books</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erotic videos (rented)</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erotic videos (bought)</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erotic magazines</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult movie channels</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone chat lines</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s magazines</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s magazines</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet chat rooms</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet websites</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet newsgroups</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal webcam sites</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The order of the items has been changed for ease of reading and reflects five domains: friends and family, health resources, erotica, mainstream media, internet.*

### Appendix D.4. Unwanted sexual activity: Supplementary analysis

This section reports a content analysis of the three open-ended questions relating to motivations for and consequences of participation in unwanted sexual activity. Thirty five percent of the sample (N = 161) reported participating in unwanted sexual activity at some point; their responses constitute the data analysed here.

Table D3 reports the frequency of each of the seven activities for the sub-sample of men who had taken part in unwanted sexual activity. The most common unwanted sexual activities were kissing, hugging and touching. O’Sullivan (1998) reported a similar pattern, with the unwanted activities most often reported by male college students being making out and hugging.
Table D.3. Percentage of men reporting regularly or often participating in unwanted sexual activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kissing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugging</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sex (giving)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sex (receiving)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal intercourse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal intercourse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 161*

Men who indicated they had participated in unwanted sexual activity were asked to give reasons for their participation, and any positive or negative outcomes in three open format questions. The results were content analysed, with content categories based on participant responses and previous research (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1994). Table D4 reports the frequency of each reason for participation. The most common reason, reported by half the men, was because they wanted to satisfy their partner or make them happy. O'Sullivan et al (1998) characterise this as an altruistic reason, with 38% of men in that study citing satisfying a partner’s needs or promoting relationship harmony. However, the most common reason cited in O’Sullivan’s study was avoiding relationship tension (48%); only 9% of the current sample cited this as a reason. Finally, taking part because of cultural pressure associated with male sexuality - men should always desire and seek opportunities to have sex - was cited by 19% of men. In the literature, this is often cited as an explanation for participation in unwanted sexual activity (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Muehlenhard, 1988; Sprecher et al., 1994). In Muehlenhard and Cook’s (1988) study 33.5% of men said they took part in unwanted sex to gain experience, and 18% mentioned gender role concerns such as appearing unmasculine. The differences in the motivations of this and the current sample may be due to the difference in age; Muehlenhard’s sample had a mean age of 20 years.

Table D.4. Reasons for participation in unwanted sexual activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to satisfy partner / Wanting to avoid partner feeling hurt or disappointed</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure to meet stereotype (may get turned on after awhile; get experience; irregular sex so take opportunities offered)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to avoid making partner angry; fear of reaction</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity / do what she wants so get what he wants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/No reason given</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table D5 reports the frequency of each positive outcome. A quarter of men did not cite a positive outcome or indicated there were none; this differs from O'Sullivan’s (1998) study were 100% of men reported a positive outcome. In the current study, the most common positive outcome was that their partner was satisfied. Given most men cited partner’s pleasure and satisfaction as the reason for taking part this is not surprising. A similar level reported this outcome in O’Sullivan’s study. A small proportion of men (5%) described the positive outcome as the encounter ending or relationship tension having been avoided; again this is in contrast to O’Sullivan’s
study were 29% of men cited the avoidance of relationship tension as a positive outcome.

### Table D.5. Positive consequences of participation in unwanted sexual activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Consequences</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner happy or satisfied; pleasure from giving pleasure</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, no/Missing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ejaculation, orgasm; relief / Became aroused and enjoyed the sex</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship or intimacy enhancement / Enhanced communication</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced something new</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get partner off case, avoid relationship problems/ It finished</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outcomes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table D6 reports the frequency of each negative outcome. Forty one percent of men did not cite a negative outcome or indicated that there were no negative outcomes. This is similar to O’Sullivan’s (1998) findings, where 52% of men said there were no negative outcomes. In the current study, the most common (28%) negative outcome was feelings of shame, guilt or feeling bad about oneself, this was usually connected to having done something they did not want or having been unable to communicate their feelings or desires. Seven percent of men reported physical pain or discomfort; no men in O’Sullivan’s study reported this.

### Table D.6. Negative consequences of participation in unwanted sexual activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Consequences</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None, no, not really/Missing</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative feeling about self; related to not being able to assert feelings / Guilt at lack of honesty / Feel abused, used, denigrated, violated, dirty</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship tensions / Negative feelings about partner</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical discomfort or pain</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor sexual performance, couldn’t orgasm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically sick, repulsed, disgusted (mostly oral sex or menstruation related)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other outcomes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix D.5. Sexual difficulties and problems: Sources of knowledge

A separate set of sources of knowledge questions were asked in the survey that specifically related to seeking sexual knowledge for sexual problems or difficulties. These responses were not used in the creation of the SexRepGrp variable, and were not used as part of any analysis. They are reported here (Table D7) for information. The sources with the highest reported frequencies were partner and men’s magazines. It is worth noting that the men in this sample did not report using formal sources of information such as their doctor, but relied on their immediate social circle and men’s and women’s magazines. That men are equally likely to seek information from a men’s magazine as their partner, lends weight to the analysis of
representations conducted in Chapter 5; men’s magazines are clearly an important source of sexual knowledge.

**Table D.7. Sexual difficulties and problems: Sources of knowledge utilised**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representations Source</th>
<th>Median Frequency</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male friends</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female friends</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning services</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone help lines</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug company leaflets</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health education leaflets</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical textbooks</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erotic magazines</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone chat lines</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s magazines</td>
<td>several times /yr</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s magazines</td>
<td>less than once /yr</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>never</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The order of the items has been changed for ease of reading and reflects five domains: friends and family, health resources, erotica, mainstream media, internet.